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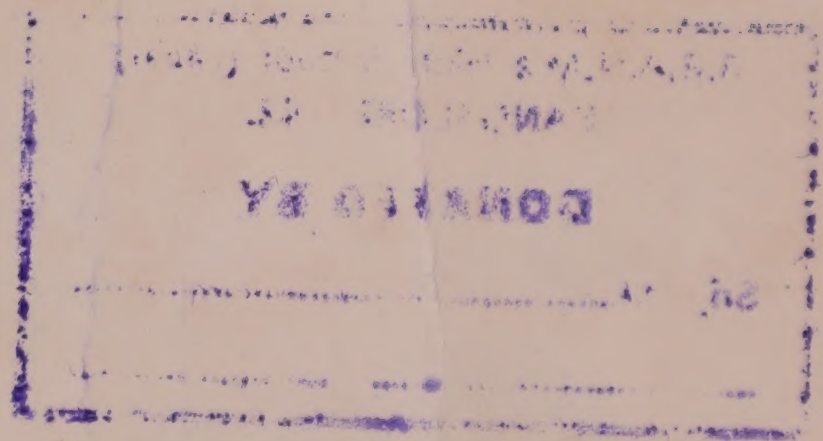
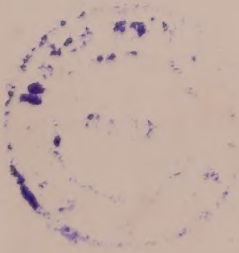
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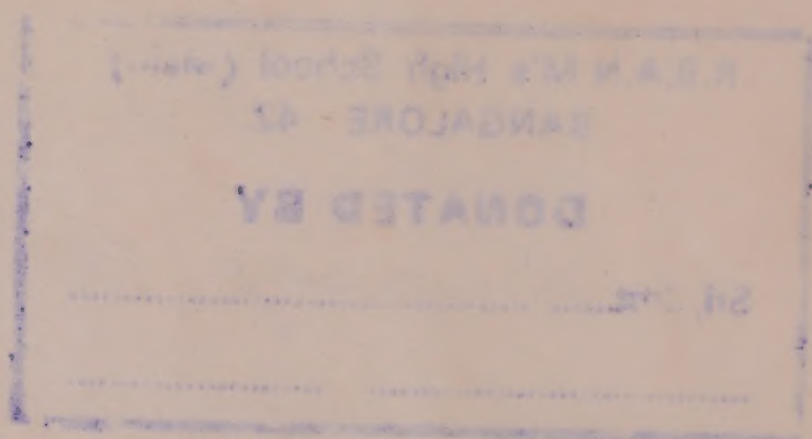
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BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

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R. PARTHASARATHI

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
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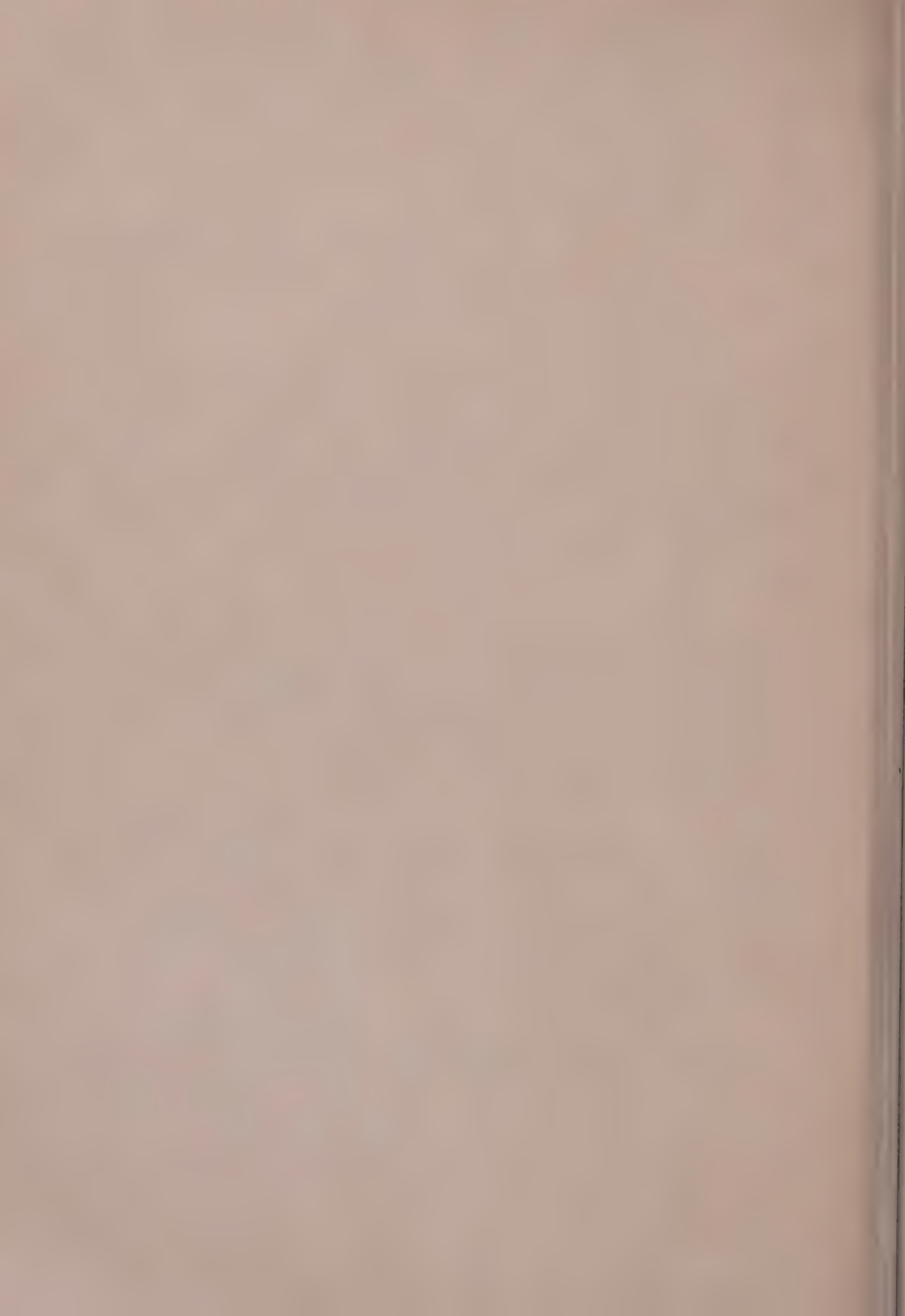
ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable persons and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different persons. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the series.



PREFACE

When I undertook to write the biography of Shri Satyamurti, I was emboldened to do so, as I felt I could thereby pay my own humble tribute to a great man with whom I had the privilege of moving rather intimately and for whom I had the highest regard. I thought my personal association with him would make it easy for me to write his biography. But when I started the work of collecting material for the book, I found what a vast and deep ocean I had to delve into. At one time I felt almost bewildered and wondered if I could complete the work in any measurable time. My initial difficulty was in getting authentic data about his early life. None but one or two of his contemporaries is alive. I am indebted to Shri S. Venkataraman, his younger brother, for many of the details on Shri Satyamurti's early life. I am particularly grateful to Shri Venkataraman for his willing co-operation and ungrudging help in this regard.

The first person I approached for gathering facts about Shri Satyamurti was his daughter, Shrimathi Lakshmi Krishnamurti. I am grateful to her for making available whatever material she had. My grateful thanks are also due to Shri P. G. Sundararajan ("Chitti", the well-known writer) who readily helped me in having access to the material he had with him and which he had collected for his own use. I am also indebted to Shri R. Thiagarajan, brother-in-law of Shri Satyamurti, who was very close to Shri Satyamurti, for helping in getting some of the details and facts. One of the oldest Congress workers who worked with Shri Satya-

murti, the late Shri R. Krishnaswami, himself a writer and journalist, helped me by giving certain data with particular reference to Shri Satyamurti's work in Tamilnad Congress Committee and also some of the incidents in his public life. I am grateful to this good friend who is no more. Shri K. Nagarajan, Advocate, Pudukottai, who knew Shri Satyamurti in his early days in Pudukottai and in later days also, has been helpful in giving me some facts and information for which I am deeply grateful to him. Shri K. Chandrasekharan, Advocate, Madras, who had close associations with Shri Satyamurti has also helped me in giving some facts which have been useful. I am grateful to him for this. I am very grateful to the late B. Shiva Rao, the well-known journalist, who gave me some interesting reminiscences about Shri Satyamurti. I am very grateful to the Director, National Archives, New Delhi, for making available the reports of Indian Legislative Assembly proceedings and Madras Legislative Council proceedings and other records and papers which formed the bulk of the material from which I gleaned the basic facts in preparing the biography. I am also thankful to Shri S. Krishnan, erstwhile USIS, Madras, for lending some of the rare books which are not easily available now, and which have been useful for reference. I am grateful to the Editor, "The Hindu", for affording facilities to go through the old issues of "The Hindu".

Shri Satyamurti's life was mainly dedicated to legislative work and the major part of his life as a politician and leader was spent in the legislature, provincial and central. Hence, naturally, importance has been given to this main aspect of his life. His great contribution as a builder of modern India was through the legislatures. Hence the focus has been on his work and activities as a Parliamentarian. His views and ideas are reflected in his speeches in the legislatures, which contain factual and purposeful aspects of various questions which loomed large in those days. His views on some of the questions are relevant even today. Hence extracts from his speeches have been given often briefly, some times at length. Even today it is thrilling to read many of Shri Satyamurti's speeches and readers may perhaps share the thrill.

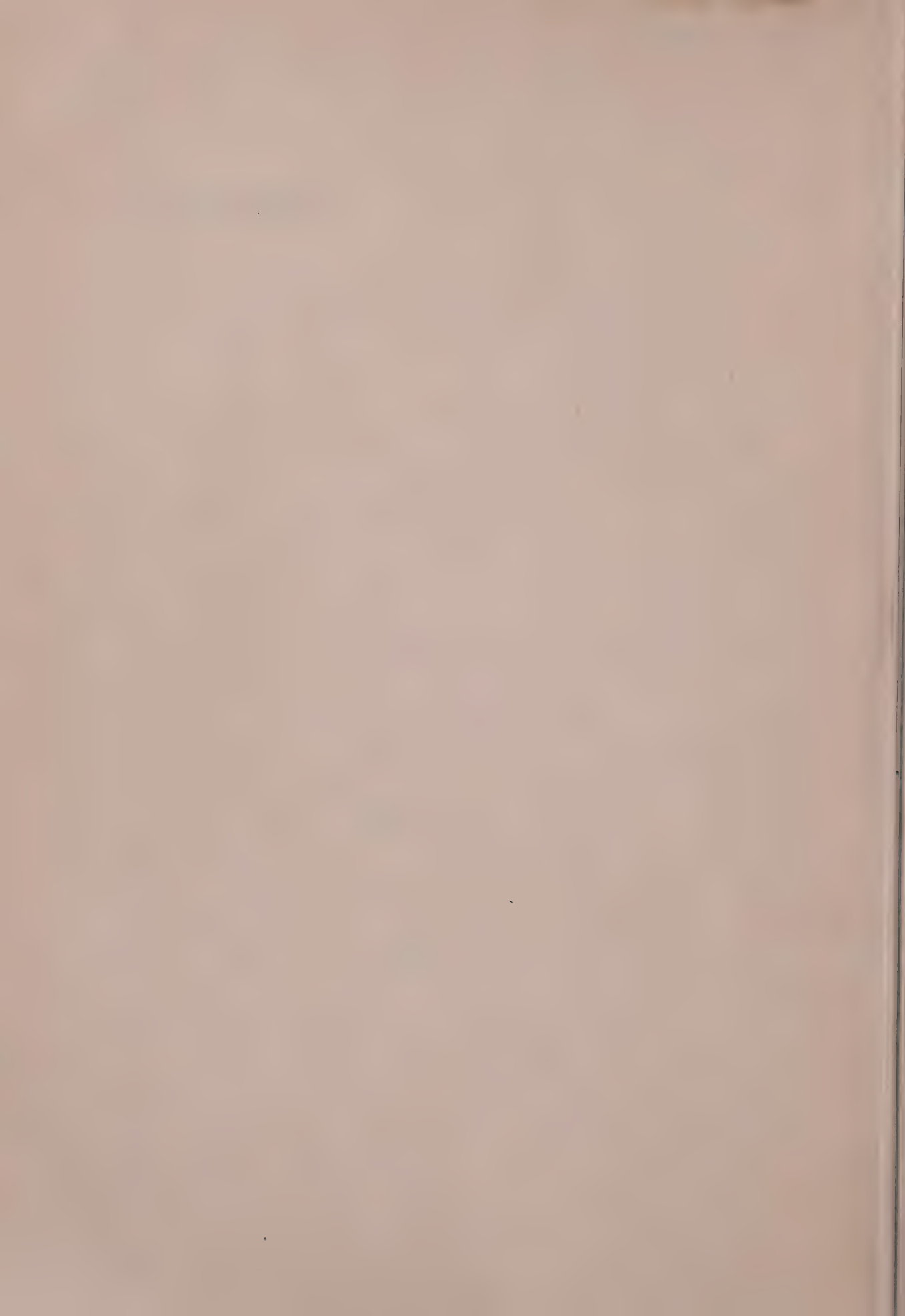
Salient features of other aspects of Shri Satyamurti's life have been given in so far as they were available from authentic sources. Anecdotes, reminiscences and the like — some of them which have developed into legends — have not found a place in this biography; interesting as they might be, it is difficult to vouch for their authenticity.

Shri Satyamurti has been one of the forgotten personalities; he was more a colourful personality than merely a glamorous leader. A biography might at least serve to keep the memory of this great man alive and on record.

R. Parthasarathi

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A Star is Born

IN AN OLD conventional type of tiled house, complete with verandah, pial, courtyard and the rest, in the *agraharam** of a small town, Tirumayyam, elevated to the status of a taluk headquarters, on the road from Tiruchchirappalli, leading to the small principality of Pudukottai (glorified by the name of a State and included in it), the shrill infantile cries of a new-born babe pierced the stillness of the early hours of an autumn morn. Sundara Shastriar, the proud father, was scanning the almanac and casting the horoscope of the new addition to his family. After the birth of two girls, like every pious Hindu, Shastriar and his spouse prayed and yearned for a son and their prayers were heard and their wish fulfilled. The full-throated infantile cries were only the trailer for the voice that was to reverberate throughout the length and breadth of the country, in later years.

Sundara Shastriar belonged to a family of Brahmins, who, for generations, had followed the traditional avocation of learning and mastering the *Vedas* and *Shastras*, and were the spiritual leaders of the community. His ancestral home was in a small village called *Keethakudi-Semmanam-Pattal*. The people of this place claimed legendary importance to this place and as the second part of the name implied, it was a ruddy wasteland. According to the local legend the soil was soaked red with the blood of Surpanakha, sister of Ravana, the Rakshasa King of Lanka, who got a literal nose-cut from Lakshmana when she tried her guiles with Rama and Lakshmana, who were in exile in the forest.

* *Agraharam*: Part of a village or town inhabited by Brahmins.

Sundara Shastriar migrated to Tirumayyam, near Pudukottai. A great scholar in Sanskrit and Tamil, and well-versed in the Hindu scriptures, Sundara Shastriar was one of the few of his tribe, who was holding the torch of learning and ancient lore, traditionally handed down from generation to generation. All his education was derived from the sacred books and he had not much of a modern English education. He however mastered the law of the land by self-education and even passed the examination qualifying himself for the profession of a *mukhtiar*, a sort of legal consultant-cum-practitioner, advising and arguing in revenue, agricultural and criminal cases which were common in moffusil courts. He had a flourishing practice in Pudukottai, the principal town of this small state, appearing in the sub-registrar-cum-sub-magistrate's court, which was his highest goal. He was popular in his profession, and earned a considerable sum, reaching up to nearly Rs. 500 per month which was quite a big amount in those days. Shastriar's father and forefathers were people who lived comfortable lives and Shastriar himself inherited quite a chunk of property for his share in the shape of a house and land. He augmented his resources by his earnings as *mukhtiar*. True to the tradition of his forefathers, he also used to give expositions on the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavatam* and other Hindu lore, but this he did not follow as a regular profession.

The rising sun on the Tirumayyam horizon on the 19th of August, 1887, heralded the birth of a son to Sundara Shastriar. The son was christened Satyamurti – “the embodiment of truth”. Shastriar who was also well-versed in astrology, among his other accomplishments in sacred lore, scanned the planetary position at the time of the birth of the son and he foresaw clearly that his young hopeful was to attain fame by the gift of the gab; that he would carry his fame across the seas and he would perform the *shraddha* of his father at Gaya (a religious obligation which every pious Hindu would like to be discharged). All these three predictions were fulfilled later by the dutiful son.

Satyamurti was the third-born among Sundara Shastriar's nine

children and the first of the five sons. The two elder children were girls. Sundara Shastriar had four more sons and two more daughters. Thus Satyamurti was one of the nine children, one of whom, a son, died prematurely. Satyamurti was the pet of his father and the latter taught him Sanskrit and Tamil and groomed him in the rich lore of those languages. It was to his father that Satyamurti owed his proficiency in Sanskrit which he could write faultlessly and speak fluently. This sound grounding stood him in good stead later and when he acquired an equal proficiency in English, he could always speak these languages so fluently and well, that they became his great armour and forte. In his public speeches in the legislatures and before learned and lay audiences, he would spice them with apt quotations from the Sanskrit and Tamil classics.

Soon after the fourth addition to the family, another son, Sundara Shastriar moved to Keeranur, another taluk town in Pudukottai, and pursued his legal practice as *mukhtiar* in Pudukottai. In 1896 the family moved to Pudukottai. Sundara Shastriar was afflicted with diabetes and had to undergo treatment in Pudukottai. Despite his failing health he continued his practice and soon established a name for himself. Within a few months of his coming to Pudukottai, Sundara Shastriar died leaving behind his wife, children and his aged parents. Satyamurti's mother typified the traditional Hindu womanhood. Though she was not educated in the modern sense, she was a dutiful wife and a loving mother. She had profound common sense and worldly wisdom. She brought up her children wisely, within the limited means left by her husband. Her father-in-law wanted the eldest son of the family to go and settle down in his village as an agriculturist. The mother, gently but firmly, resisted the idea.

Satyamurti's primary education was in the village pial-school. When the family moved to Pudukottai, Satyamurti and his younger brother were put in the lower secondary school of the Maharaja's College of Pudukottai. Satyamurti's paternal uncle, who was himself a graduate, stood by the family and lent his support to them. There was another family friend — an old

client of Satyamurti's father and a flourishing merchant and rich landlord in Pudukottai, Shri Sabhapathi Pillai — who stood by the family in their hour of need. Satyamurti and his younger brother continued their school education in Pudukottai until matriculation. They both appeared for the matriculation examination in 1903. Unfortunately, both failed in the examination. This was the first and only failure of Satyamurti in his educational career. He, however, passed the matriculation examination the next year, creditably. He joined the Maharaja's College in Pudukottai for his F.A. (in those days the pregraduate course was known as First Examination in Arts). He passed this examination with high credit. So pleased was the Principal of the College with his performance that he straightaway recommended him for a teacher's post in the school. Satyamurti worked as a teacher for barely a month; his heart was set on higher studies and he wanted to become a graduate. He decided to join the Christian College in Madras for his Bachelor of Arts course. Though his mother was reluctant and apprehensive, on the assurance of his classmate and friend, Rajagopalan, who was also joining the Christian College, that he would look after him, she gave her consent to Satyamurti for proceeding to Madras. (This contemporary of Satyamurti, Shri Rajagopala Iyer, became a District Judge later).

Satyamurti joined the Christian College in 1906. He was one of the most brilliant students, who attracted the attention of his eminent professors, Dr. Skinner and Dr. MacPhail. It was to them Satyamurti owed his mastery of the English language which became the sharpest weapon in his armoury. He passed the college examinations with distinction and in the university examinations he secured a first class in English and a high second class in Sanskrit and History. Dr. MacPhail took great interest in Satyamurti and due to his efforts Satyamurti was appointed temporarily as Tutor in History in the college. Dr. MacPhail also encouraged him to study for the Master of Arts Degree. Even while doing work as a Tutor, Satyamurti began gathering material for his M.A. thesis. When, however, the term

of the Tutorship came to a close, Satyamurti desired an extension for another year, as this would enable him to continue his work for the M.A. degree. But the extension was not given and more than him Dr. MacPhail felt greatly disappointed. Satyamurti gave up the idea of studying for M.A. and joined the Law College at Madras. He passed with distinction, both in the F.L. and B.L. examinations, securing a first class in both. The then Principal of the Law College, Mr. Nelson, was so taken up with Satyamurti that he persuaded him to apply for a Lecturer's post in the Law College. But, for some unknown reason, he did not get the appointment, much to the chagrin and disappointment of Mr. Nelson. It was a blessing in disguise, for, had Satyamurti entered the teaching line in law, his talents would have been wasted within the four walls of the Law College and the country would have lost a precious leader.

Satyamurti took his apprenticeship under Shri V. V. Sreenivasa Iyengar, a leading lawyer and a great patron of the arts and literature, who later became a High Court judge. After the one-year period of apprenticeship, he enrolled himself as a High Court Vakil in 1913. He came under the tutelage of S. Srinivasa Iyengar, an eminent lawyer of high intellect. Srinivasa Iyengar who was then interesting himself in politics and public affairs was so taken up with Satyamurti's brilliant oratory and debating capacity, that he took him under his protective wing. From that time on Srinivasa Iyengar was Satyamurti's friend, philosopher, guide and benefactor. When later Srinivasa Iyengar entered active politics and became a leader in the Congress, he depended on Satyamurti for support and used his ability to capture the imagination of the people by his powerful oratory. Satyamurti became his right-hand man. The relationship of master and disciple continued till the end; though at times there were occasions when he and Srinivasa Iyengar disagreed on important issues. Satyamurti remained loyal and true to his master, to the last.

Though Satyamurti had entered the legal profession, his natural instinct was towards the public forum and his heart was in politics. Even while he was a student of the Pudukottai

College, Satyamurti had shown marks of leadership and oratorical propensities. When the Bengal Partition issue sent a wave of indignation and anger in the country, young Satyamurti could not remain silent. He was still a student in Pudukottai. He held a "public meeting" to protest against the injustice of the Bengal Partition, before a grand audience of about half a dozen youngsters in their teens. He thundered forth against the tyranny of the British. Whether the youngsters who listened to him understood what it was all about or not, Satyamurti was sure of his target. This was his debut on a public platform, which later became his natural mooring, from which he commanded audiences a thousand times bigger than his first juvenile audience.

It was during his brief legal career that Satyamurti came under the influence of towering personalities like the late (the Rt. Honourable) V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, whose impeccable English, delivered with "silver sibilance" was a source of great inspiration to Satyamurti, as to many young men and even many old men, in those days.

In 1908 the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Madras. Satyamurti was naturally drawn towards the great event. He enrolled himself as a volunteer under the captaincy of Srinivasa Sastri. This was his first association with the Congress. Since then Satyamurti's active participation in the Congress progressively pushed him forward. In 1914 when the Congress met again in Madras, Satyamurti headed one of the important sub-committees. From 1914, a year after his enrolment as a Vakil of the Madras High Court, he attended every session of the Congress and every session of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee held every year, took active interest in the work of the Congress and also participated in the discussions.

It was, however, at the Provincial Conference held at Kancheepuram that Satyamurti came into the limelight. The Conference was presided over by Shrimati Sarojini Devi. Mrs. Annie Besant, the leader of the Home Rule Movement, moved a resolution calling upon the people of India to support the British and their allies in the First World War, which was being waged then.

Opposing the resolution vehemently, Satyamurti made a forceful and fiery speech which well-nigh turned the scales against the veteran leader, Mrs. Besant. There was a tie and the votes were even. The President, Sarojini Devi, however, gave her casting vote in favour of the resolution and thus saved an embarrassing situation.

Recounting the Kancheepuram Conference in his election manifesto, issued when he contested the Legislative Council election in Madras later, Satyamurti said, "I gratefully remember that the part which I was privileged to play at the Madras Provincial Conference at Kancheepuram earned for me the confidence and esteem of my countrymen, which have enabled me to serve them according to my humble lights."

And so, a star was born in the national firmament, scintillating with brilliance, over the political horizon for two score years.

Makings of a Politician

WHEN YOUNG SATYAMURTI made his bow on the political stage, the elder politicians, who were now dubbed Moderates, bowed out of the Congress. With the advent of Mahatma Gandhi, who returned to India with a halo of victory acquired in South Africa, the Indian National Congress came under his influence. The Congress was undergoing a radical change from a petitioning body, passing pious resolutions about self-government, in humble terms, but in grandiose verbiage, and was emerging with more dynamic activism. Mrs. Annie Besant set the pace first with her Home Rule Movement, which stepped out of the rut of pen-and-paper war to a more vociferous agitation. Even this stopped with platform speeches, but it moulded a more effective programme like the Swadeshi movement which later Gandhiji improved into a politico-economic programme with a wider range touching the rural masses. When Mahatma Gandhi entered the arena with his unique non-violent technique, which had been tried with success in South Africa, it had an electrifying effect on the Congress and established a direct and effective impact on the people. The Congress was till then a preserve of intellectuals, whose appeal and impact stopped with the educated and enlightened few. Mahatma Gandhi took the Congress to the common people and awakened them from a lethargic indifference to an emotional awareness and upsurge.

Satyamurti came under the spell of the Mahatma's magnetic personality and irresistible call. When he burnt his boats and gave up law and strode firmly into the political field, the state of the nation was one of a giant awakened. When the Congress

under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became a live force in the life of the nation, Satyamurti became a live force in the Congress.

When the First World War was in the last stages, the Government of India was exercised very much in mind by the rising ferment in India and the growing revolutionary movement, especially in Bengal and the Punjab. The government wanted to nip in the bud the growing force of nationalism in the land and to arm itself with powers to meet the rising tide. In December 1917, the government set up a committee known as the "Sedition Committee", under the presidentship of Justice Sydney Rowlatt to enquire into the "sedition movement" and make recommendations to deal with it. The Committee's recommendations envisaged extraordinary and unlimited powers to the government, which in effect would completely curb even the elementary right of freedom of movement and association. There was unanimous opposition and wide resentment all over the country from all parties and all quarters. Undeterred by the strength of public opinion, the government proceeded to put into effect the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee by introducing two bills called the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Criminal Law Emergency Powers Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council in February 1919 and the bills were referred to a Select Committee. Vithalbhai Patel (who became later famous as the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly) moved for putting off the bills until after six months of the life of the Legislative Council. The bills were vigorously opposed by Srinivasa Sastri (who characterised the Emergency Powers Bill as "a callous disregard of liberty"), Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Surendranath Banerjee, K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, the Raja of Mohammadabad and M. A. Jinnah and other leaders who voiced their strong resentment against the Bill. Ultimately, when the Bill was passed in the teeth of opposition, in March 1919, Jinnah, who was shocked, tendered his resignation from the Legislative Council and in a bitter letter addressed to the Viceroy said, "a government that passes or sanc-

tions such a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilized government."

Mahatma Gandhi, who was already in the forefront, announced his intention of starting a satyagraha and called upon the people to pledge themselves to passive resistance to the oppressive laws.

In the wake of the passing of the repressive law, (known as the Rowlatt Act) martial law was proclaimed in the Punjab and severe, shocking oppression followed. In Punjab atrocities were committed by the military authorities; people were made to crawl on their bellies in the streets; curfew was clamped and the public was terrorized. Punjab bore the look of a military camp. As if to crown the atrocities committed, a great tragedy occurred in Amritsar. A public meeting was convened in a small park called the Jallianwala Bagh to protest against the terrorism practised by the government. Thousands of people jam-packed themselves into that small park, which was enclosed on all sides by walls, with only a small entrance in front. The meeting was proceeding peacefully, when without any provocation or justification, a military platoon, under the command of General Dyer, swooped down on the unarmed innocent crowd and without any warning to disperse, began shooting indiscriminately at the crowd. The people could not escape as there was only one gate and they were mowed down mercilessly by gun-fire under the direction of General Dyer. In their attempts to save themselves many jumped into a well in the park and lost their lives. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was then the Governor of Punjab, lauded General Dyer for his "brave action". Later, General Dyer was recalled and impugned in Parliament and died an ignominious death.

At the time of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Satyamurti was away in England and as soon as he returned to India he plunged into the fray created by the Hunter Committee Report on the Punjab tragedy and Jallianwala Bagh atrocity. He wrote a series of pungent articles in "The Hindu" shredding to pieces the majority report of the Hunter Committee on the Punjab happenings. "If Lord Hunter and his European colleagues had deliberately set about writing an apologia for the official misdeeds

in the Punjab tragedy", acidly remarked Satyamurti, "they could not have easily done better. The attempt to whitewash is writ large on every page of the report and once more India has been given a lesson as to the futility of these commissions and committees." Of the minority of the Indian members of the Committee, Satyamurti had this to say: "All the Indians who had had anything to do by way of investigating the Punjab tragedy, have practically come to the same conclusions and the Indian minority of the Hunter Committee are no exceptions. The Indian members of the Committee are not partisans, one of them belongs to the Moderate school of politics, and is now one of His Majesty's judges in the High Court of Bombay and one other is not even a politician. Two of them are distinguished lawyers and none of them comes from the Punjab and they were appointed obviously because they were considered least likely to be under the influence of any prejudices or prepossessions." In conclusion Satyamurti said, "It is some relief to return from the despatches of Mr. Montagu and from the report of the majority (Hunter Committee) reeking with a Bismarkian blood-and-iron, to the extremely human document of the minority, although one would have wished they had expressed themselves more strongly."

Commenting on the report of the All India Congress Committee on the Punjab tragedy, he complimented the Punjab Enquiry Commission, set up by the All India Congress Committee, as a body composed of men of position and standing in the country. He praised the manner in which evidence was recorded by the Commission. Out of statements of 700 witnesses examined, about 650 statements were admitted, sifted and verified and accepted only after the Commission was satisfied with the bonafides of the witnesses. Satyamurti concludes, "It is easy for any unprejudiced person to see that the enquiry conducted by the Punjab Enquiry Commission is vastly superior to the enquiry of the Hunter Committee."

The ingrained ability and capacity of Satyamurti to put public reports under the critical and analytical lens of his sharp intellect and political acumen were patent in his review of the official and

unofficial reports of the Punjab tragedy and show that the makings of a parliamentarian were there in him.

In the Punjab and Bengal the revolutionary movement gained ground and rattled the British Government which launched on a repressive policy under the Defence of India Act. The Muslim League leaders changed their attitude to the British Government to one of animosity on account of Britain's unhelpful attitude to Turkey in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911. The younger generation of Muslims, especially middle class, was roused to a sense of patriotism and they joined the ranks of the nationalists. The Congress-Muslim League Pact of 1916 united the two great parties in a common cause. The Congress-League Pact called upon the British Government to declare their intentions to confer self-government in India early. The scheme which the Congress-League Pact put forth envisaged the partial Indianization of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the system of elected majorities to be introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council and the Provincial Legislative Councils and giving more powers to the Provincial Councils. Nineteen members of the Imperial Legislative Council, with a preponderance of prominent Moderates, also submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy asking for further political reforms. Mr. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, considered the scheme of the Congress-League as the "most anti-authoritative presentation of the claims of leading Indian political organisations," and "commanding so large a measure of support." National consciousness was roused and the Home Rule Movement became a nation-wide movement.

Mahatma Gandhi, just returned from his success in South Africa, started his first satyagraha in Champaran in Bihar against the high-handed exploitation by the European indigo planters. Conspiracies and revolutions were a daily nightmare to the government. Repression by the government followed but they found that this did not stem the tide of national uprising.

Montagu, who had just become Secretary of State, announced in the House of Commons that the policy of His Majesty's Government was to encourage the gradual Indianization of the

administration in India and development of self-governing institutions "with a view to progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." In pursuance of this the Secretary of State for India was to proceed to India to discuss this with the Viceroy and representative bodies and leaders.

Montagu came to India in November 1917 and discussed matters with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, met Indian leaders and gathered their opinions. The joint report of Montagu and Chelmsford on the political climate in the country urging the need for constitutional reforms was considered by the British Parliament in December 1919 and the Bill for introducing constitutional reforms was passed. The Act was one step forward to meet the demands and aspirations of the people, though it did not go a long way in granting responsible government in a democratic sense. Still, large powers were retained in the hands of the British bureaucracy and the Centre still held the reins tight over the Provinces. Certain subjects like local self-government, public health, education and police were transferred to the jurisdiction of the provincial Governments while the Central Government retained subjects like defence, foreign relations, tariffs, railways, posts and telegraphs and income tax.

A system of dyarchy was introduced in the Provincial set-up, by dividing the subjects as "reserved" and "transferred", the former being administered by the Governor-in-Council with the help of Executive Councillors and the latter by ministers from the elected members. Both of them were nominated by the Governor. Though the Provincial Legislatures were supposed to be composed mainly of elected representatives, the franchise was restricted and was on a communal, organizational and institutional basis. Though the scope of the Provincial Legislatures was enlarged to some extent, by conceding the right of members to put questions, to raise points on subjects of administration, and discuss and express views on matters of general and public interest and to pass resolutions, the power of veto and certification vested in the Governor nullified the very object of such rights given to the

Councils. At best the Councils could function as glorified debating societies. The minorities' interests were strongly protected by separate electorates for Muslims and Sikhs and other communities. Direct election by territorial constituencies was to be adopted. In the Centre, two Chambers of Legislature were to function, one, the Council of State and the other, the Legislative Assembly. A little over half the members of the Council of State were to be elected, the rest were to be nominated. For the Legislative Assembly out of 145 members 104 were to be elected. The right of members to put questions and move resolutions was conceded. The Governor-General had over-all powers to veto any bill or to restore by certification "cuts" passed in the Legislature. He had also powers of certification on legislative matters.

The Congress, which met in special session at Bombay, in August 1918, while recognizing the proposals contained in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were an advance, found them "disappointing and unsatisfactory." Mrs. Besant who was a moderate extremist condemned the Montagu-Chelmsford Report as "unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India." When the Government of India Act 1919, which embodied the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms was passed, there was widespread discontent and dissatisfaction on all sides. The Indian National Congress which met at Amritsar in 1919 criticized the new reforms as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing." (This became the slogan of the Congress which Satyamurti was never tired of repeating on every platform at that time). But the Congress did not still lose faith in the good intentions of the British and was even prepared to work the reforms "so far as they may be possible, so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government." The Congress even thanked Montagu for his earnestness in pushing through the reforms.

Even Mahatma Gandhi, who called the British Government "satanic", wrote in his "Young India" telling the people that their duty was not to criticize the reforms but to quietly work so as to make them a thorough success, anticipating the time for a full measure of responsibility.

But the events that followed belied all these hopes. The country was in a ferment, the Rowlatt Act, the Punjab wrongs and finally the Jallianwala Bagh massacre enraged the people and the leaders were severely disappointed and shocked. The Rowlatt Act and Punjab atrocities, the martial law, the "crawling orders" and "curfews" which were inflicted on the people all served as faggots to the fire. Gandhiji called for a country-wide hartal on April 6, 1919 and it was a complete success. The indifferent attitude of the British towards Turkey estranged the Indian Muslims who started the Khilafat Movement as a protest against the great wrong done to Muslims in the Middle East. Hindus and Muslims united and came closer together. This naturally alarmed the British who tried to drive a wedge between the two communities; they tried to wean the Muslims and Moderates from the main current of the surging tide of national awakening.

A special session of the Congress was held in 1920 under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai, "the Lion of the Punjab". Gandhiji, who was greatly disillusioned, wanted to launch a mass movement. Actually he had inaugurated a non-violent non-co-operation movement on August 1, 1920 and declared that the movement would go on until the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were righted and Swarajya was established.

The annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur in 1920, under the presidentship of C. Vijayaraghavachariar, the old veteran of Salem, endorsed Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent non-co-operation movement, with the Triple Boycott programme as the basis. In pursuance of this programme, Mahatma Gandhi called upon the people to boycott the legislatures, law courts and schools and colleges. He wanted Congressmen and others to refrain from contesting the elections to the new legislatures under the Montford* Reforms, and asked the people not to exercise their franchise. He wanted lawyers to give up practising law in the courts set up by the British and the litigants to settle their disputes amicably

* Montford is an abbreviation for Montagu-Chelmsford.

among themselves. He wanted students to come out of schools and colleges run under the British system of education, which he wanted to be replaced by a national system. He wanted that the existing schools and colleges then should be completely nationalized and new schools and colleges set up under a national system of education.

Though there was opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's non-co-operation movement from the Congress President, C. Vijaya-raghavachariar himself, and older leaders, Gandhiji was able to carry the day in the Congress. He toured the country propagating vigorously his programme. He roused a new consciousness among the people and there was wide and enthusiastic response throughout the country. Mahatma Gandhi started the Tilak Swaraj Fund with a target of one crore of rupees; the response was quick and spontaneous from the common people as well as the rich and the Fund was subscribed for in full.

In the first flush of the movement large numbers of students came out of schools and colleges. Lawyers, many of whom had a lucrative practice, gave up their profession. The non-co-operation movement was unique in the sense that for the first time in the history of the struggle for freedom in India, the common people came forward to support and participate in the movement; a mass consciousness was aroused and the Congress moved down from its "armchair and rose water" politics to a real mass-oriented programme of action. Mahatma Gandhi became the undisputed leader, not only of the Congress, but of the nation. His name was on the lips of every man and woman and child. His spiritual and magnetic personality cast a tremendous spell over the people. With unwavering faith and relentless purpose, he led the national movement with his non-co-operation programme and day by day his popularity and sway over the people increased. He became the unparalleled leader. He identified himself with the poorest of the poor when he saw stark poverty and misery all round during his tours and his heart was moved. When he was touring Tamilnadu he saw people half-naked; he discarded his turban and kurta and from then on he clad himself with a mere loin-cloth.

This earned for him such names as the "loin-cloth saint" and "naked fakir".

When the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms proposal was on the anvil, leading political parties in India, including the Congress, sent deputations of leaders to England, to place their view-points before the British Government and public. The Congress delegation was to be headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. In April 1919, when he was just beginning to find his feet in the legal profession, Satyamurti got telegrams from Bombay, from Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya inviting him to join the Congress deputation, which was leaving for England. He had barely 24 hours to make up his mind, and, without a moment's hesitation he proceeded to join the deputation. He had to make some hasty arrangements for his professional work and joined the deputation which left for England. This was his first trip abroad. He expected to return to India after some weeks; but when he went to England he was asked to tour round England for carrying on the propaganda for the Congress and explain to the people the Congress stand. He had to stay in England for six months, during which period he did extensive touring all over England and addressed public meetings, met leaders and did intensive propaganda. He addressed more than 60 public meetings, visiting almost all important cities in Great Britain. Sixty to seventy thousand Britons in all listened to his speeches. One great achievement of his tour was that it went a long way in removing the prevailing misapprehensions among Britons about India and Indians and helped to create a better understanding. Satyamurti was also able to make valuable contacts with some of the influential leaders in Britain. Among them were Col. Wedgewood, Mr. Ben Spoor and others who all appreciated and congratulated him on his work in England.

A notable appreciation of his work came from the leading members of the Scottish Independent Labour Party. In the course of a letter to him from the Party, they said: "Your eloquent appeals delivered to the many huge meetings you addressed in this country have made a powerful impression and, in your absence, we will

carry on the work of fighting for justice to the Indian people." Satyamurti was able to make a very good impression and he was able to enlist many friends among the leading British politicians who were in sympathy with the Indian cause. Many well-known stalwarts and leaders from India had addressed British audiences before; but no young Indian politician had captivated them to the extent that Satyamurti was able to do. With a striking personality, a typical Indian flair about him, a powerful voice, clear diction, and great ability to present his case in a convincing and eloquent manner, the young "brownie" from India, held his audiences spellbound and left them gaping in wonder — for many of them never knew until then that an Indian could stand on level with any seasoned British politician. Satyamurti was able to dispel much of the colossal ignorance about India and its aspirations during the tour, as no one else had been able to achieve before.

On his return to India, after the resounding success of his maiden foreign tour, Satyamurti was accorded a generous and warm welcome. The great success of his tour in Britain and the warm welcome at home made him, "not to go back to my profession at all, but to do Congress propaganda and work in the districts." In pursuance of this resolve, during practically the whole of the year 1920, he carried on an intensive propaganda on behalf of the Congress throughout the Madras Presidency, (which was then composed of Andhra, Malabar and a few districts in the West Coast besides the Tamil areas). There was not a district which he did not visit; there was not a single important village in the Tamil districts which he did not cover. At an average of two meetings a day, he addressed six hundred meetings, mostly in Tamil and, occasionally in English. The average attendance at these meetings was not less than a thousand. There were no microphones and loudspeakers in those days and most of the public meetings were held in the open. Satyamurti's voice could reach the remotest man in the huge audiences, in those days.

Had Satyamurti pursued his profession of law there is no doubt

that he would have been one of the most successful lawyers but the country would have lost a great politician.

When Gandhiji started his non-co-operation movement, Satyamurti raised his voice of opposition. He did not join the non-co-operation movement. But he had a high sense of discipline and he was loyal to the Congress, remaining in it and working for it.

In a letter to Mahatma Gandhi, dated April 20, 1921, Satyamurti clarified his views and position frankly and in detail:

“You know what my attitude has been towards the Calcutta and Nagpur Congress resolutions on non-co-operation. I had made up my mind that, for the time being, there was no political life for men of my way of thinking and that I must plough my lonely furrow till other times. I was getting myself to this irksome position when certain things have happened which compel me to revise my position.” Recounting the “things that have happened”, he said “You have made any political work impossible for those who do not accept the Congress resolution, at least formally and openly. I do not complain. Perhaps it is best. I may frankly tell you that life without political work appears a dreary thing to me.” Satyamurti has given in a nutshell what he considered his life’s mission — political work — and to the end he lived up to it.

He averred that the great awakening and enthusiasm roused in the country by Mahatma Gandhi, as evident from the public demonstrations, was more intended to honour Mahatma Gandhi personally than any acceptance or faith in his programme. But he recognised the fact that a new spirit of self-reliance and desire for Swaraj had permeated the people and, more than any other living person in India, Mahatma Gandhi was the cause of “this magnificent national awakening”.

“The place then of every patriotic Indian is by your side,” he admitted.

Satyamurti’s mind was in a conflict and though he did not agree with Gandhiji about the non-violent non-co-operation movement, yet, when Gandhiji and Maulana Mohammed Ali had

requested him — the latter publicly — to join this great national struggle, he was in two minds. After spending sleepless nights “prayerfully and anxiously considering my position, solely with a view to throw myself heart and soul into this work”, he came to a decision.

In the same letter addressed to Gandhiji he declared his decision to suspend his practice as a lawyer “with a view to devote my whole time to Congress propaganda. I will not spare myself in that work. I have decided on this step because the Congress resolution expressly calls on me to do so and I cannot do justice to my Congress work, while remaining in practice. And you have very kindly agreed that it is sufficient that I suspend my practice till the end of this year.”

In reply, Gandhiji wrote a letter to Satyamurti from Simla. on May 6:

“Dear Mr. Satyamurti,

.....I think that your qualified suspension of practice is not good enough but, I must confess I do not understand your retention of the membership of the Senate. But above all, if you throw yourself into the struggle, it must be with absolute conviction. A man like you cannot serve the cause unless he approached it with confidence. I would like you to come to it as suitor, not as advocate. I confess to you that I missed the ring of confidence about your letter. I would advise you to see Mr. Rajagopalachari and discuss the matter with him. If you finally come, I do not comprehend any difficulty about your maintenance. After discussion with Mr. Rajagopalachari you will please write to me and tell me, or even tell him, what your requirements will be if you have finally elected to come in.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi”

Though he could not have the “absolute conviction” that Gandhiji expected, like a disciplined soldier that he was, he submitted himself to the Congress mandate. He did not court imprisonment like many others, but he carried on a vigorous propaganda in support of the Congress programme.

The Congress boycotted the first elections held under the Montford Reforms introduced under the Government of India Act of 1919. The Liberals and Moderates had a free field and contested the elections held in November 1920 to the two Houses of the Indian Legislature. The non-co-operation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi gained momentum in the first lap and for the first time in the history of the freedom struggle, the people were roused from lethargic indifference and stoic submission to foreign rule; a new spirit of patriotic fervour swept throughout the length and breadth of the country; there was a great awakening and, indeed, it was a unique and unprecedented non-violent revolution that had taken the place of violent upheavals on the one extreme and a meek petitioning and vociferous verbal warfare on the other.

The British Government which had armed might and brute force to sustain itself, was dismayed and puzzled by the new type of non-violent weapon which Gandhiji had discovered and which threatened to paralyse its might and power. The angry British lion roused and piqued by a frail little unarmed man with the masses behind him, suddenly lost its balance and rushed on a rampage to show its strength and power. The government launched on a wild sweep of repression in a trigger-happy frenzy. It clamped repressive and oppressive laws to gag people, and to prevent them from giving free expression to their desires, the fundamental human right of association and meeting together in public was thrown to the winds, under the guise of law and order; disobedience to these laws was sought to be put down at the point of the bayonet and by gunfire; precious and innocent lives were lost; mass arrests were made; mock trials were held; the non-co-operators would not, on principle, defend themselves and they were convicted and clamped in jail for varying terms of imprisonment, extending to as long as ten years. Front rank leaders, as well as the workers, courted arrest *en masse* and were incarcerated. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and put on trial and convicted to six years' imprisonment for "sedition and disaffection towards the established Government" for his article in

his paper "Young India". (The article was captioned "Shaking the Manes" — and referred to the British lion, symbol of British imperialist power). The whole country was in raging turmoil and seething discontent and resentment. In fact the very Government which accused Mahatma Gandhi and the other leaders of spreading disaffection had themselves effectively sowed the seeds of disaffection by their reckless acts of violence under the cloak of law and order.

Satyamurti had declared, that though he did not agree with Gandhiji's non-co-operation programme, he could not leave political work and he realised his place was in the Congress and as he wrote to Mahatma Gandhi "the place of every patriotic Indian is by your side". He was patriotic enough to stick to the Congress, though he could not act up to Mahatma Gandhi's call. He, however, suspended his practice "temporarily", thus partially responding to Gandhiji's call to boycott courts. But he did not give up his membership of the Madras University. The reason he gave was that the boycott of University was not contemplated in the Triple Boycott. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, could not approve of this interpretation.

Satyamurti's avoidance of being actively involved in the non-co-operation movement by courting arrest gave point to his critics. Alone among the leaders, he had evaded jail-going. As a critic put it "He has no faith in Gandhi's programme, he does not approve of Gandhi's methods and he cannot bring himself to go whole-heartedly into the non-co-operation movement". Satyamurti was not made for that kind of heroism.

In a special article to a paper "Bharat Mata" he scoffed at the non-co-operators. "On the one hand we have the non-co-operators whose simple doctrine is 'to court imprisonment, avoid violence, wear khadi and you will have Swaraj...'. But in mundane politics, methods are as important as ideals". "By all means let Mahatma Gandhi go on with his programme. But all of us are not made of that mould, heroic. Let us do such work as we can."

He returned to the burden of his political song and he advocated the capture of the legislative bodies in India.

"I have held," he said justifying his stand, "and still hold the view that this Reform Act is disappointing, inadequate and unsatisfactory and cannot lead us to the promised land. But I have equally strongly held and still hold the view that these councils can be and ought to be used as levers for accelerating the pace towards Swaraj."

This view of Satyamurti patently differed from that of Desabandhu Das, who advocated the capture of the councils, to wreck them from within. Obviously, it cannot be put merely as a mental dissimilitude between these two leaders.

The Liberals in the Legislatures (Central and Provincial) got agitated and concerned. They did their best within the Legislatures to raise their voice of protest against the repression of the Government. In the very first meeting of the new Indian Legislative Assembly, Jamnadas Dwarakdas of Bombay moved a resolution asking the Government of India to declare its firm resolve to maintain connection between the British Empire and India on the principle of perfect equality of races. The resolution further asked the Government to express regret for the Martial Law in Punjab. In the Council of State, Srinivasa Sastri who succeeded Gokhale as leader of the Moderates (after the latter's death) moved a resolution recommending the appointment of a Committee early to examine the repressive laws and report if any or all of them should be repealed. The resolution was carried. Tej Bahadur Sapru, who was Law Member in the Government of India, helped in repealing some of the repressive laws against the Press and the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act. In the Central Assembly, the Moderates and elected members managed to score some victories over the Government e.g. the Budget proposal to double salt duty was heavily defeated.

Lloyd George, who was then the British Prime Minister, made a rather scornful and aggressive speech in Parliament on August 2, 1922 on the question of Indianization of the services; he cast aspersions on the efficiency of Indians in the services and declared

that at no period could British officials, whose assistance was necessary, be dispensed with. It was in this speech that the British Civilians were first characterised as the "steel frame" of the whole structure. The "steel frame", which became a notorious expression, became the target of scornful and cynical references and attacks by Indian leaders.

Rao Bahadur T. Rangachariar, another Liberal leader in the Assembly, expressed his resentment on the British Prime Minister's views. He said : "I cannot forget the words 'steel frame' — I cannot forget the words 'British Raj' ...". Nor were the words forgotten for a long time and figured in the discussions of the legislatures and speeches on public platforms.

The non-co-operation movement which had gathered such great momentum and roused mass consciousness reached a crescendo but some unfortunate incidents put a sudden brake to its further progress. Early in February 1923, in Chauri Chaura, a village in the United Provinces, an angry mob was provoked by police excesses and set fire to the police station with some policemen locked inside. The policemen perished in the fire. Gandhiji was profoundly shocked and stricken with grief at this outrage. All along he had been insisting on strict non-violence as the sheet anchor of the non-co-operation movement. The Chauri Chaura tragedy and similar outbreaks of violence, all provoked initially by the violence of the police, deeply affected Gandhiji and he suspended the non-co-operation movement and asked all Congressmen to stop courting arrest or breaking or disobeying repressive laws and restraining orders of Government. He asked Congressmen instead to take up the constructive programme of khadi, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, campaigning against drink evil and such other constructive activities. This put out many Congress leaders and workers, many of whom were still in jail, who chafed and raged behind prison bars and characterised the situation as a "national calamity".

In Madras, Satyamurti took up the campaign for council entry. From the beginning, Satyamurti, who was never sanguine about the non-co-operation movement in general, was publicly vociferous

against the boycott of councils. He believed the Congress should contest in the elections and capture the legislatures, not with a view to working them, but for the purpose of carrying on the non-co-operation from within and wrecking the legislatures. He also believed that the constructive programme could be carried through by working for it from within the councils.

At the Tamil Nad Political Conference held in Tirupur, in November 1922, Satyamurti put forth a powerful plea for lifting the ban on council entry. He affirmed that far from being contrary to the principle of non-co-operation, council entry would further the non-co-operation movement from within the councils. He said it was carrying the fight into the enemy's fortress and fighting him on his own ground. He cited the example of the Irish leaders, Parnell and De Valera, who had entered the British Parliament with a similar objective. The no-changers, under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari, were in a large majority and the motion in favour of council entry was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

Meanwhile, the non-co-operation movement was paralysed. Most of the leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and a very large number of active Congressmen were in jail and the Government had launched on a severe repressive policy. In these circumstances, the All India Congress Committee set up a Committee to enquire into the Civil Disobedience Movement and to chalk out a course of action. S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, C. Rajagopalachari, M. A. Ansari, Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Vithalbhai Patel were members of the Committee. The Committee examined the question of how far the Civil Disobedience Movement had succeeded and if non-co-operation could be revived; it also considered the council entry question. On council entry, the Committee was sharply divided into two equally powerful camps. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, C. Rajagopalachari and M. A. Ansari opposed any change in the Congress policy regarding council entry; Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Vithalbhai Patel were for council entry. Thus emerged the two factions — the

"No-changers" and "Pro-changers" and the battle royal began between the two camps.

The Committee, while being sharply divided on the question of council entry, had however recommended the capture of municipal councils, district boards and local bodies by the Congress, "with a view to facilitate the working of the Constructive Programme."

Satyamurti, who had been vigorously campaigning for council entry, in a rejoinder to editorial criticisms in "The Hindu" against the move for council entry, as being opposed to the principle of non-co-operation, cited the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee's recommendation for capturing municipalities and local boards. He argued that it was with the very same object that council entry was also advocated. "I deny," he said, "that council entry is inconsistent with the basic principle of non-co-operation" (as stated by "The Hindu" in its editorial). He argued on the same grounds given by the C. D. Committee for capturing municipalities and local boards. Council entry would facilitate the working of the constructive programme and the propaganda for khaddar, removal of untouchability and prohibition. Other items of the constructive programme could be effectively carried on with benefit within the councils.

Besides campaigning for council entry not only within his own home Province, Satyamurti also tried to canvass opinion in favour of council entry outside the Province. He consulted and kept in touch with eminent leaders like Jayakar and Sapru. Dr. Annie Besant, who was organising a conference in Delhi in November 1923, with a view to "put before the country a definite plan for utilising the reforms in a way which would lead directly to responsible Government or Swaraj, the goal of British Policy in India" invited, among others, Satyamurti also to the Conference. Satyamurti declined the invitation. In his letter to Dr. Besant he observed that "holding a Conference as the one proposed without Congress representatives was like playing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark". This shows that Satyamurti was always loyal to the Congress, whatever his differences were

with some of the policies of the Congress. In his detailed letter to Dr. Besant, Satyamurti analysed the whole situation and gave his arguments. While welcoming the move by Dr. Besant he gave his reasons why and where he did not agree with her. He questioned Dr. Besant's faith in the intentions of the British Government that Swaraj was the goal of British Policy in India. He pointed out how the British Prime Minister's speech in Parliament belied this expectation. Referring to the condition imposed that only those who were in favour of obtaining further reforms by constitutional means were admitted to the Conference, Satyamurti wrote, "I am afraid this definitely rules me out." Citing the historic events of Hampden's refusal to pay ship money, beheading of Charles I, banishment of James III, the struggle of the Charterists and, later, of the Suffragettes, Satyamurti was convinced the ruling classes in England were not so sweet-tempered as to listen to the pure voice of reason. So, he said, he could not commit himself beforehand to the mere method of passing resolutions and sending petitions.

He affirmed his belief in utilising the councils in the struggle for Swaraj. "I will not hesitate", he said, "to use any of the methods Parnell used at Westminster even if that would mean wrecking the councils, if that would lead to Swaraj. I want to go to councils to carry on the struggle for Swaraj there. So I cannot believe in working and developing reforms. These reforms are incapable of development. They must be scrapped, the sooner the better for everybody. It is to demonstrate the need for this that I mainly advocate Congress capturing councils."

He finally enjoined Dr. Besant to join the Congress and strengthen the hands of those like himself who were trying to make the Congress take a practical view of things and capture the councils at the next elections.

When the All India Congress Committee met at Calcutta in November 1922 before the Gaya Congress, the council entry question again figured prominently. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Vithalbhai Patel, N. C. Kelkar, Jayakar and Satyamurti, A. Rangaswami Iyengar and others were ranged

on the side of council entry. The no-changers front had an equally formidable array of stalwarts like Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Devi, M. A. Ansari, T. Prakasam and others. A compromise was reached by which both parties agreed to leave the question to be decided at the Gaya Congress.

Satyamurti meanwhile carried on his campaign and prepared himself for the "Thermopyle" at Gaya.

The annual session of the Congress was held at Gaya in December 1922. Desabandhu Das was elected President. In his presidential address, Desabandhu Das reviewed the situation in the country in the wake of the non-co-operation movement. He strongly condemned the repressive policy of the Government in incarcerating Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders and thousands of other Congressmen. He affirmed his faith in the non-co-operation movement which, he said, was the only effective method to fight the might of the British Government. He quoted history and cited the revolutionary movements in France, Italy, England and Russia where violence had failed to achieve the object. He advocated entry into councils in order to mend or end them. He said it was not inconsistent with the principles of non-co-operation.

At the open session of the Congress, Satyamurti moved a resolution accepting the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee's recommendation on boycott of British goods; but he qualified it by saying that only such British goods should be boycotted as were selected and recommended by a committee. Rajagopalachari opposed the resolution on the ground that the partial boycott was a symptom of weakness and on the ground that it contemplated substitution of the boycotted British goods with goods from other countries like America, which was not inculcative of the spirit of "Swadeshi". Satyamurti's resolution was defeated. The council entry question came up before the open session. Rajagopalachari moved the resolution advocating continuance of boycott of Councils. The resolution called upon Congressmen not to stand for election to the legislature and also not to vote in the elections. S. Srinivasa Iyengar moved an amendment to the

effect that Congressmen should be allowed to contest in the elections but should not take their seats in the Councils if elected. This amendment was defeated and Rajagopalachari's original resolution was passed by a huge majority.

When the All India Congress Committee met on January 1, 1923, immediately after the Congress session, C. R. Das announced his resignation of the Presidentship of the Congress. Motilal Nehru followed suit by resigning the Secretaryship.

On New Year Day 1923, C. R. Das announced the birth of the new Swarajya Party. It was to function within the Congress. In the manifesto issued by the Party, the Party accepted the basic creed of the Congress viz. attainment of Swaraj by all "peaceful and legitimate means"; it also accepted the principle of non-violent non-co-operation as the only means of fighting for Swaraj. The new party which would contest elections was to carry on the fight within the Councils on the basis of these principles of the Congress.

C. R. Das was elected leader of the Party and Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and Chaudhuri Khaliquzzuman as Secretaries.

The campaigning by the two wings now assumed more vigorous proportions with giants and stalwarts on both sides pitched against each other.

When the situation became serious and threatened to split the Congress, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad stepped in as a mediator. In February 1923 he set about trying to effect a compromise with a formula which, in effect, called upon both parties to join the civil disobedience movement, if it was started. If the AICC failed to declare civil disobedience, both parties were at liberty to carry on their campaigns. This was not acceptable to C. R. Das, who wanted that both parties should be allowed to work out their programmes separately. Maulana Azad however continued his efforts to effect a compromise. Ultimately he succeeded and, at Allahabad, it was agreed that the campaigns by both parties would be suspended till April 30, 1923.

A special session of the Congress was held at Delhi in September 1923 under the presidentship of Maulana Mohammed

Ali who had just been released from prison. It was at this session that the ban on council entry was finally lifted.

If Gandhiji, who was then in jail, had been there to guide the Congress, perhaps he would have solved the problem in his own unique way. When he was released two years later, things had gone far too ahead and all he could do was to accept the *fait accompli*.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Coconada (Kakinada) at the end of 1923, under the presidency of Maulana Mohammed Ali. In his Presidential address, he called upon Congressmen to stand united and though he was not convinced of the soundness of the Swarajya Party policy, he said nothing should be done to estrange the leaders of the Party.

Finally, compromise was arrived at between C. R. Das and C. Rajagopalachari. A compromise resolution on the Triple Boycott and approval of the resolution passed by the Special Congress, held at Delhi, in September 1923, permitting council entry by Congressmen, moved by C. Rajagopalachari and seconded by C. R. Das, was passed unanimously.

Meanwhile, the Swarajya Party which had started functioning and had contested in the elections to the Provincial Councils had captured considerable number of seats in several places.

C. R. Das had been touring the country, organising and canvassing support for the Swarajya Party. When he came to Madras, Satyamurti was one of the few who stood by him and accompanied him in his campaign tour and translated his speeches in Tamil. The success of Das's tour in the South was largely due to Satyamurti's indefatigable organising capacity.

The Swarajya Party, under the leadership of Desabandhu Das, trimmed its sails, and got ready to fight the elections. Motilal Nehru issued the Party manifesto in October 1923, declaring the Party's objective, which was to press the demand for recognising the right of the people to control the running of the Government; if this was not conceded, the Party would resort to a "policy of uniform, continuous and constant obstruction to make Government through the Assembly and Councils impossible." The

Swarajists' battle-cry was "Wreck the Reforms from inside."

Satyamurti who had been campaigning for council entry, had been in consultation with leaders like N. C. Kelkar, M. R. Jayakar, Tej Bahadur Sapru and others for the formation of the new Party. Kelkar and Jayakar, who had all along opposed the non-co-operation programme of Mahatma Gandhi, were now happy it was called off. Tej Bahadur Sapru voiced forth the opinion that "there would be no greater tragedy" if the Congress persisted in boycotting the councils.

"The Hindu" of Madras, under the editorship of S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar wrote a pungent editorial criticising strongly the move for council entry. Satyamurti wrote a more pungent rejoinder to "The Hindu"; but that paper did not publish it. It was, however, published in the "New India", edited by Mrs. Annie Besant. Referring to "The Hindu's" "Parthian Shot" in expressing the view that council entry would violate the basic principles of non-co-operation, Satyamurti asked, "what is the basic principle of non-co-operation? ...Why should we exalt a method into a principle and make it a touchstone of all Congress activities." He proceeded to argue: "I deny that council entry is inconsistent with the basic principles of non-cooperation". He cited the recommendation of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee of which "the talented editor of 'The Hindu'" (Kasturi Ranga Iyengar) was a member; the Committee had recommended the capturing by Congress of municipal bodies and district or local boards "with a view to facilitate the working of the Constructive Programme".

In the Swarajya Party, Satyamurti became the trusted lieutenant of Desabandhu Das, and later, in the Congress, of Motilal Nehru and S. Srinivasa Iyengar. His brilliant and effective speeches from the public platform and in the Council earned for him the name "Trumpet Voice" of the Congress. His political opponents called him the "Drummer Boy" of the Congress. He took these as compliments and he was proud to be the "Drummer Boy" of the Congress, and not a "Drone" behind the

British bureaucracy, nor "His Master's Voice" as his "honourable friends on the opposite benches" were.

Before we proceed to follow the blazing trail of Satyamurti's success as a politician, we may trace back our steps to take a retrospective look at the early beginnings of a politician.

III

Early Victories

SATYAMURTI'S FIRST POLITICAL campaign started in Pudukottai. The native State of Pudukottai (a small principality hedged in between the borders of Tanjore and Ramnad districts, which was also Satyamurti's native State) claimed his attention in 1920. The then Rajah of Pudukottai had contracted a marriage with an Australian and got a son by her. The people of Pudukottai were agitated about this as they feared the prospect of an heir born to the Rajah by a foreigner succeeding him to the *gadi*. Satyamurti who had just become a lawyer and settled in Madras, took up the cudgels on behalf of the people. He carried on a campaign against the succession of the son of the Rajah born of a foreigner. He addressed a meeting in Pudukottai condemning the marriage itself and denouncing the right of the Australian-born son to the *gadi*. The feelings of the people of Pudukottai were further roused. The Rajah was agitated and angry, clamped the editor of a local paper in jail for publishing Satyamurti's speech, which was considered seditious and issued a proclamation forbidding Satyamurti from entering or remaining within the limits of the State as his speech delivered on November 12, 1920 was "calculated to disturb the loyalty of our people towards the Paramount Power and our person and family."

Satyamurti launched a vigorous campaign against the ruler and his administration and tried to draw the attention of the "Paramount Power" (British Government of India) and the people of India to the state of affairs in this tiny native State. This may be said to be almost the beginning of agitations in the native States and Satyamurti heralded it. He tried his utmost to get

the externment order against him withdrawn, by approaching leaders and Members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures. Some of them felt, rightly, that under the Constitution any question affecting any native State was beyond the purview of the Legislatures. But other leaders (including Moderates) like C. V. Venkataramana Aiyangar, Annamalai Chettiar (later to be Rajah of Chettinad), Dr. P. Subbaroyan and T. Rangachariar took up the matter and tried to do their best. T. Rangachariar suggested that Satyamurti should take up the matter with friends in England. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri took keen interest and spoke to Montagu, the Secretary of State for India and the latter wrote to the Viceroy about it. Montagu also promised to speak to the Rajah. Satyamurti also wrote to the Viceroy detailing the state of affairs in Pudukottai. Other British friends took up the matter and campaigned for Satyamurti. Meanwhile, Satyamurti himself interviewed the Viceroy. For two years the matter was kept a live issue by the intransigence of the ruler. Ultimately, when public opinion became very strong against the Rajah, the Rajah issued a proclamation in October 1922 announcing his decision to reside permanently out of India, thus virtually abdicating. When Satyamurti was away, participating actively in the Congress session at Gaya, the Regent of Pudukottai cancelled the order of externment against him on January 1, 1923, for which "statesman-like act" Satyamurti conveyed his thanks to the Regent, through a friend.

Presiding over the Sixth Pudukottai People's Conference in 1926, Satyamurti perorated, "I am very proud of that honour" (of being invited to preside). "I am equally proud to call myself a native of Pudukottai State". He called upon the people of the State to rouse themselves, "assert their God-given right to Swaraj and achieve it. Nothing is easier. For, when once people make up their minds to attain their freedom, there is no power on earth which can stand in their way."

Satyamurti continued to take active interest in the affairs of Pudukottai. He raised the issue of franchise to the people and urged that the people of Pudukottai should be given the same

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voting privilege as the people in Madras Province, in respect of elections to the Madras Legislative Council. In a letter to the Regent, he brought home to him this issue. The Regent, while thanking Satyamurti for taking up the cause of Pudukottai in this regard, followed up by taking necessary steps to secure the same rights as the people of the Madras Province had, for the people of Pudukottai. The Madras Government responded immediately by declaring they were prepared to extend the franchise to the Ruler and subjects of Pudukottai State. The Pudukottai incident proved Satyamurti's tenacity and established his reputation as an able politician. The Pudukottai incident was but a precursor to his later achievements.

That Satyamurti had established his reputation from the day he entered the political arena was something not achieved by everybody. The thing that made people sit up and gape in wonder at this young man who swept audiences off their feet was his power of speech. He was a born orator who could keep people spellbound for hours, by his forceful arguments and a free natural flow of language. Writing about him as early as 1922, a contemporary aptly summarised Satyamurti's power of speech : "Satyamurti is a born orator. He speaks well and speaks high - his language is fierce... He makes the noise of a Roosevelt ; he wields the cutting tongue of a Churchill." Colonel Wedgewood, whose heart Satyamurti had captured during his visit to England, declared, with the possible exception of Lloyd George, Mr. Satyamurti was the best speaker he had heard. "A voice that carries," wrote the contemporary, "a tongue that is facile and a language that rivets one to one's seat... His eloquence was the envy of his compeers and the delight of his audiences."

Few people could achieve such singular fame and success on the platform at such a young age as Satyamurti. At thirtyfive his name and fame and voice had reached the four corners of the land. Satyamurti's name had become one to reckon with in politics. The older politicians like Srinivasa Sastri, Sivaswami

Aiyar and C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar had all been dubbed Moderates and faded into the background.

In Madras, in the Congress there were the old stalwarts like C. Vijayaraghavachariar and, with Gandhiji's advent, a new leadership came to the forefront. C. Rajagopalachari, a flourishing criminal lawyer in Salem, came under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi and became one of his trusted lieutenants. He joined the non-co-operation movement, giving up his lucrative practice. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was the Advocate-General, later joined the Congress and though he widely disagreed with Gandhiji's policies and programmes, he was for a time a great force in fighting reactionary and communal forces in Madras. T. Prakasam, a successful barrister, gave up his practice and joined the non-co-operation movement. Other leaders from Andhra and Malabar (which areas then formed parts of the composite State of Madras) jumped into the movement and were in the forefront. Satyamurti was one of the first to sign the Satyagraha pledge when the call came from Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 in the wake of the Rowlatt Act. Thus he emerged as one of the foremost among the younger leaders of the Congress.

The emergence of the Justice Party in Madras was a notable event in political history. Among those actively associated with the formation of this Party were Sir C. Sankaran Nair and Sir P. Thiagaraya Chetty. The Raja of Bobbili, Dr. P. Subbaroyan and others joined the Party. This Party was favoured by the British Government which thought that it would stem the tide of the Congress power over the masses. British authority was sadly disillusioned when it found that the Congress hold over the masses could not be shaken. The Justice Party which consisted of rich landlords and zamindars was only serving their own interests rather than the interests of any section of society.

Satyamurti and Srinivasa Iyengar were the two giants on the Congress side in Madras Province in the early twenties. First, in the municipal elections and later in the elections to the legislature, the Justice Party was defeated by large margins due

mainly to the vigorous and telling campaign of Satyamurti. The names "Congress" and "Mahatma Gandhi" were, of course, the electrifying sources which contributed to the success of the Congress, but it was Satyamurti and Srinivasa Iyengar who spear-headed the fight against reactionary and communal forces led by equally stalwart giants.

The early twenties saw the Congress turn into a militant organisation. The struggle for independence was intensified under Gandhiji's leadership. Gandhiji's unshakeable faith in non-violence committed the Congress to that principle. The fight against the British power was more effective and powerful through non-violent Satyagraha than through violence.

Some parties like the Justice Party and some individuals like the Moderates were inclined to support the government. It was in this atmosphere that the first elections under the Montford Reforms were held towards the end of 1923. With the Congress mandate behind them, permitting them to enter councils, the Swarajists contested the elections. The Swarajya Party election manifesto, issued by Motilal Nehru, declared that the Swarajya Party was an integral part of the Congress and it accepted the fundamental principle of non-violence, advocated by Gandhiji and accepted by the Congress. The Party also condemned the Montford Reforms as a mere blind to further the selfish interests of the British, under the pretence of granting responsible government. The manifesto declared that on entering the Councils, the Party would demand the right of the people of India to control the system and machinery of Government. In the event of Government refusing to concede the people's right or after accepting it, failed to implement it, the Party would follow a policy of uniform, continuous and constant obstruction with a view to making Government through the Assembly and Councils impossible.

The Swarajists secured striking victories over their rivals everywhere in the elections. In the Central Assembly itself, they secured 45 out of 104 elected seats in a house of 145. The Liberals — among them giants like Surendranath Banerjee, S. M. Paranpype, C. Y. Chintamani and T. V. Seshagiri Iyer — were

trounced. In the Provinces also, the Swarajists registered creditable successes. They secured a clear majority in the Central Province. They were the largest party in Bengal. In Bombay and United Province they secured a considerable number of seats. In Madras, Bihar and Punjab their strength was not as much as in other Provinces.

In Madras, the Justice Party put up a tough fight. Satyamurti contested his election as a Swarajist from the University constituency. He had been elected to the Senate of the Madras University in 1920, had topped the polls and had proved his ability as a debater and statesman, by his remarkable grasp of the subject -- whether it was education or politics. He had made a mark in the University by espousing the cause of education on a sound nationalistic basis. During the discussions and debates in the Senate he had shown extraordinary ability by contributing his valuable suggestions on varied subjects. So, his success in the elections to the Legislative Council from the University constituency was a foregone conclusion.

In the election manifesto that he issued, Satyamurti declared "it is right and proper that I should state my credentials and programme". Explaining why he sought to represent the University constituency, he said, "this is the only electorate which consists of all classes and creeds among the people of the Presidency, viz., the Andhras, the Tamils, the Malayalees, the Canarese, the Hindus, the Mussalmans and the Christians. If, therefore, I am so fortunate as to be returned to the Council, I shall be occupying a unique position there as being entitled to voice the educated opinion of the whole Presidency."

His performance in the Council later amply proved how justified he was in his claim.

He recounted, in the manifesto, how he entered politics in his young age and how he was connected with the Congress for 15 years and how he had steadfastly worked for the Congress, giving up his profession of law. "Ever since my political birth I have been a Congressman and I will continue to be so. I recognise the Indian National Congress as the work of the best

brains and the best hearts of India for the last 40 years. And, it is the duty of every patriotic Indian to strengthen this great national institution in order that it may achieve its cherished object of Swaraj for India !” He then enumerated his various public activities and services and his association with various public institutions and organisations like The Madras Mahajana Sabha (one of the oldest institutions which was a common platform for all public matters), The National Fund and Industrial Association (promoting Swadeshi), The Triplicane Urban Co-operative Society (one of the earliest co-operatives), The Provincial Co-operative Union, The Madras High Court Vakils’ Association, the South Indian Association, The Madras Presidency Postmen’s Union, The Presidency Students’ Union and last but not least, The Suguna Vilasa Sabha, a premier amateur cultural organisation, which contributed to the development and growth of the theatre in Madras and which attracted the elite and the talented.

Stating his faith categorically, he declared that he was in favour of immediate Swaraj for India in order to make it a self-governing nation with self respect; he would oppose all laws intended to crush or suppress the political movement and he would strive his best to promote Brahmin-non-Brahmin and Hindu-Muslim unity. He would, to the best of his powers and opportunities, promote the constructive programme. He also averred his faith in Prohibition and promised to strive his best to see that education was given a distinct Indian orientation. He pledged that he would not seek for himself or try to obtain for any relation of his any office under Government or title. The pledges he gave, he declared, were mostly in the words of Lala Lajpat Rai.

He was returned to the Madras Legislative Council from the University constituency with a big majority vote. From then on, he fought almost a lone battle in the Council ; the Swarajists were in a minority and his was the loudest and the most eloquent voice that raised the banner of opposition and kept the Congress flag flying.

He was one of the youngest politicians to enter the legislative

assembly for the first time but his speeches, questions and work in the Legislative Council put into shade many a seasoned politician.

The "Trumpet Voice" of the Congress reverberated in the Council Hall and shook the Government benches and put the loyalists and reactionaries in jitters.

From the very first day his voice rose above others in the Council. He amply justified Gandhiji's remark, made earlier, when the Swarajya Party was formed, that it was enough if one Satyamurti was sent to the Legislature. Satyamurti amply justified Gandhiji's confidence in his ability by his remarkable performance in the Provincial Legislative Council and later in the Central Assembly. This again impelled Gandhiji to remark, on another occasion, that if there had been ten Satyamurtis in our legislatures the British would have quit India long ago.

IV

The Trumpet Voice

THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE Council under the Montford Reforms was formed after the elections towards the end of 1923. It first met in November.

At the very opening session of the Legislative Council, Satyamurti came to the fore and his voice began to reverberate in the Council Chamber. His maiden speech was delivered on November 27, 1923, when he supported the no-confidence motion moved by C. Ramalinga Reddy, another notable orator (late Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University), against the newly-formed ministry of the Rajah of Panagal. The Rajah of Panagal was Chief Minister in the First Legislative Council and when the new Council came into existence after the election, he, along with the old ministers, resigned. He formed a new ministry in consonance with the rules and conventions. This ministry was however open to severe criticism as it was designed deliberately on a communal basis. Lord Willingdon, who was Governor of Madras then, wanted to counter the growing force of the Congress and got round the leaders, who formed the Justice Party, to give loyal support to the British Government. Lord Willingdon used the Justice Party as a tool against the Congress; he asked the Leader of the Party to form the Ministry which the latter readily did. C. R. Reddy's no-confidence motion was to condemn the non-democratic, unconstitutional manner in which the Ministry was formed under the guidance and protection of the Government.

Satyamurti took the first opportunity to make his maiden speech in support of the motion. The speech was a stirring and

eloquent one. Says R. V. Krishna Iyer, who was the Assistant Secretary of the Council: "The House had never heard anything so eloquent or stirring before... His speech on the no-confidence motion of 1923 was the first speech of his I heard; and it has left an indelible impression in my mind."† Many others who heard Satyamurti had the same experience.

For a maiden speech it was a remarkable performance; it did not smack of a novice in politics; it had the flavour of a seasoned parliamentarian.

Even his opening words were characteristic of his style: "Mr. President, Sir, it is with very great pleasure that I have to support the resolution. But I sincerely regret, Mr. President, that my maiden speech in this House should be on such a highly controversial question..."

For over half an hour he thundered forth against the improprieties of the Ministry headed by the Rajah of Panagal. He took point by point and tore to shreds the Ministry which, he said, was formed contrary to all canons of constitutional propriety, as it was constituted against the verdict of the people in the last general elections; he also said it did not command the confidence of the House. In his characteristic way he quoted a Sanskrit aphorism which says: "wise advice should be taken even from a young boy, as from an old man" (*Yuktivyuktam Vacho Grāhyam Bālādapi Vriddhādapi*).

Adverting to the treatment of political prisoners, Satyamurti made a pointed attack on the leader of the Justice Party, Sir P. Thiagaraya Chetty: "I was referring to the speech delivered by the Honourable the Leader of the Party, who is anxious to proclaim from the house-tops that he was still functioning as the King along with the Chief Minister... he so forgot his age, his sense of chivalry, his sense of political right-thinking, as to say in this House, that political prisoners should be treated worse than dacoits and robbers...." Sir P. Thiagaraya Chetty interrupted by saying: "I said so, and I say so even now" which was

† *In the Legislature of Those Days* by R. V. Krishna Iyer.

greeted by cries of "Shame, Shame". Satyamurti instantly took advantage of this and continued, "I am very glad the Honourable the Leader of the Party has come out in his true colours and I appeal to him and to my honourable friends who follow him to lay their hands on their hearts and say this, as before God, whether they can support a party whose head says categorically that political prisoners are worse than dacoits and robbers...."

Satyamurti's speech was so telling and effective that the ministerial party itself felt obliged to dissociate from Sir P. Thiagaraya Chetty's views. Dr. P. Subbaroyan, who was a member of the Justice Party then, was impelled to say, "I think it is inhuman that a person who is prepared to sacrifice himself for the sake of what he thinks is the interests of his country, should be treated as a dacoit." Sir A. P. Patro, who was Education Minister, declared that the opinion of Sir P. Thiagaraya Chetty was not shared by the Party generally and that it was his personal view.

Referring to the banning of Poet Subramania Bharathi's songs, Satyamurti exposed the Chief Minister's policy to ridicule. He said : "There was a great man in Tamil Nadu by name Bharati. If he had been born in England he would have been made the Poet Laureate. His songs are so elevating and patriotic. When the Tinnevely Taluk Board introduced the teaching of those songs in schools under their management, the Chief Minister's anger was roused and he saw revolution in those songs. Is he the Minister who is going to guide the destinies of local boards and municipalities and the education and discipline of the boys and girls of the schools under their management ?"

The power-packed speech of Satyamurti was no mere verbal pyrotechnical display. It was full of facts and constitutional points ; he did not spare any of the Ministers or members of the Government benches. Each of them was a target of his fusillade. He did not spare the Governor either ; the latter had a full-share of Satyamurti's rapier thrusts for the way in which he had manoeuvred a communal ministry into power. Concluding his speech with a Parthian Shot, Satyamurti exposed the ministerial party's selfish ends : "His (Rajah of Panagal's) Party has

no political programme, has no political faith, has no political opinion. It depends for its existence upon party bias and upon the bogey of the Brahmins. I have the honour to belong to a party which does not care for the loaves and fishes of office. We realise the truth of the Upanishadic saying : *Na karmana na poojayā na dharmēna tyagenaikēna amritatvamānashuhu* (Not by deed, not by worship, not by wealth, but by sacrifice alone can immortality be obtained).

In the final peroration he prophesied : "I already see the hand of death upon this Ministry. It is not permanent. It is bound to die. When this Ministry dies, it will die unwept, unhonoured, unsung." His maiden speech was greeted with loud cheers. How true his prophesy was, history proved later.

The motion of no-confidence was defeated by a majority of 22. The 43 members who voted for it were all elected members while out of the 65 who voted against, only 44 were elected members, three of whom were ministers.

Satyamurti's maiden speech in the Madras Legislative Council was the first sprout which later grew and blossomed him into the outstanding parliamentarian that he was. Even at the outset, from the day he took his seat first in the legislature, his unrivalled ability as a parliamentarian was established and proved. During his career in the legislatures, provincial and central, over a period of two decades, his unquestioned capacity and talent and his infallible power of advocacy and debate, set the standard for parliamentary democracy. His greatness did not rest merely on his oratorical power, or the powers of expression, the choice of language or the powerful delivery, of all of which he was a past-master, but it was based on more solid foundations of his deep study and knowledge of facts and the unique ability and manner of convincing presentation. This was one of the strongest points of Satyamurti's parliamentary career, which gave him well-deserved eminence.

The next striking performance of Satyamurti in the Council was when he moved a resolution recommending to the Government of India that it should withdraw from participation

in the British Empire Exhibition which was to be held in London in 1924.

It was one of his longest speeches in that session, in which he marshalled strong arguments to prove that, in the face of all the insults and the bad manner in which the British were treating India, it was derogatory to the self-respect of the nation to extend its co-operation by participating in the Exhibition. He referred to the humiliations of Indians in the Colonies and said that the resolution "seeks to give expression in a very mild form to the resentment, sorrow and humiliation which the Indians have been put to in the matter of status and position of Indians in the Empire as a result of the decision of His Majesty's Government with regard to the Indians in Kenya." He quoted V. S. Srinivasa Sastri who said his heart was "lacerated by the ingratitude and tyranny towards Indians in Kenya." Satyamurti quoted Rev. C. F. Andrews; he quoted Sir Robert Hamilton, ex-Chief Justice of Kenya; he quoted Winston Churchill (who said, "Is it possible for any Government with a scrap of respect for honest dealing between man and man to embark on a policy of deliberately squeezing that native of India from regions in which he has established himself under every security of public faith"); he quoted Shakespeare (*Merchant of Venice*: Shylock's peroration on Jews); he quoted Yudhistira from the *Mahabharata*; he quoted verses in Sanskrit — in support of his arguments. Concluding his half-hour long speech he said the resolution was in vindication of the wounded pride of India. "I am not asking you to forswear your feeling for the Empire but to say with me — I am sure every Indian must say -- 'not that I love the Empire less, but I love India more'." (This was another of the typical quotes which Satyamurti was fond of using in different but apt contexts).

Throughout the life of the Second Legislative Council from 1923 to 1926, Satyamurti was prominent in the opposition benches; he lost no opportunity to gain for his party an enviably strong position, though it was in a minority. He was the only spokesman of the party who could attack the Government

tearlessly and make the members of the Treasury benches squirm in their seats. He was the *enfant terrible*, as it were, of the Council; with this difference that it was not his own elders he put to blush by indiscreet prattle; it was the "honourable gentlemen" opposite whom he gave the jitters by his rapier thrust speeches. It was not by mere oratory or eloquence or vocal power that he made the "opposite gentlemen" tremble and quake — often with rage — but by his masterly presentation of his side and clever advocacy supported by facts and figures; he was always armed with constitutional authority which he could quote with ease. The most vociferous or the most profound parliamentarians in the opposite side could be simply silenced by his infallible arguments. It was amazing that he could have bloomed into such a capable parliamentarian considering the fact that he was just new to the legislature. He had mastered the rules of procedure and could give points to the most seasoned legislator. His legal acumen was an additional factor that augmented his other accomplishments in the Council Chamber.

There was not an important debate or discussion in which his stentorian voice was not heard. Within a few months of his entry into the Council, Satyamurti had made a mark and gained an enviably high reputation for himself as an able parliamentarian; few could excel him in debate or argument.

Satyamurti started astoundingly well as a parliamentarian and kept his flag flying, by his forceful personality and unrivalled talent for putting up and maintaining a strong front, he was able to keep the Treasury Bench on pins. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Ministers and Members of the Executive Council came to the Council every day with trepidation dreading the prospect of facing the sallies from their intrepid opponent, Satyamurti.

Supporting an adjournment motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition condemning the Chief Minister in issuing a whip to some members of the Council asking them to support the Government, against the no-confidence motion moved by C. Ramalinga Reddy, Satyamurti pointed out the impropriety of the

Chief Minister acting as the Leader of the Party in issuing a whip. He made pungent remarks about the manner in which support for the Ministry was canvassed. He referred to the singular silence maintained by the Chief Minister when he put the question in the House if a whip was issued by the Chief Minister, and the Leader of the House answered the question. "I ask", said Satyamurti, "whether the significant silence (of the Chief Minister) can be reconciled with any ordinary standards of political honesty or decency." Mark the clever and ingenious way of putting it!

His first participation in a budget discussion was during the first year of the Council in March 1924 in the discussion on the Budget for 1924-25.

It was a masterly analysis of the budget, and Satyamurti tore the Budget to pieces, point by point and subject by subject. His criticisms were always supported by irrefutable facts and figures. One of the important points he stressed was that the "salt tax must go down." "We want to see this iniquitous impost should be reduced and the salt tax made as low as possible." Six years later, Gandhiji started the Salt Satyagraha for the total abolition of salt tax. We do not know what Satyamurti would have said if he were alive today.

Satyamurti brought home to the Government the defects, deficiencies and shortcomings in the administration of almost every department of the Government. He had taken great pains to study the working of each department and spot out the weak points. But with all his criticism of the budget, he paid a handsome tribute to the Finance Member (Sir Charles Todhunter) who was about to retire, in these words "... may I congratulate him (Finance Member) in his capacity as Leader of the House and say that his relations with this House have been perfect and excellent and he has a standard of good manners, evenness of temper and geniality of humour which his colleagues on the Treasury Bench may well emulate and follow."

That was Satyamurti — never lacking in personal courtesy and good manners — always ready to give even the devil its due.

During the discussions on the various demands in the budget, Satyamurti had his say on most of the important demands. During the discussion on the demand for Excise, a cut motion was moved by C. V. Venkataramana Aiyangar (Coimbatore). Satyamurti, supporting the cut motion took the opportunity to make a vigorous plea for Prohibition. Referring to the Minister's attitude on the question, Satyamurti made some characteristically sarcastic comments: "Do you talk of Prohibition! No, the heavens will fall. The Minister knows better than the Americans, for total Prohibition will be a dangerous thing! Do you know, why, Sir? Because in this country there is no enlightened public opinion.... Do you talk of local option? Oh, no! The Minister won't think of it." Concluding his speech with a prophetic note, he said: "...we shall see in some time... sooner may it be... a better, a dry Madras Presidency from which will go forth, honest, manly citizens, worthy of this Presidency and this country." His wish and prophesy were fulfilled 12 years later, when the first Congress Ministry came into power, under the Chief Ministership of Rajaji and Madras was one of the first provinces to introduce Prohibition. Satyamurti's views on Prohibition were however different outside the Council. He entered into lists with C. Rajagopalachari who was one of the staunchest Prohibitionists and who was responsible for making Prohibition an important plank of Gandhiji's constructive programme. Rajagopalachari, who was engaged very deeply in the constructive programme of Gandhiji, brought Prohibition to the fore and placed it in the forefront of the Gandhian armoury. Satyamurti however differed from him and placed attainment of Swaraj before Prohibition.

When the demand on Education came up and a cut motion was moved to urge the establishment of the Andhra University, Satyamurti heartily supported it and put in a strong plea for the establishment of that University. Speaking later, on November 6, 1925, when the Andhra University Bill was at the last stage, Satyamurti said: "My attitude on this question is one of mixed regret and rejoicing. I regret the Madras University would no

longer function in the Andhra districts. But I rejoice the Andhras are getting some basis on which they can construct a University of their own. They have got something which I know and I trust they will, with their patriotism, their energy and their enthusiasm, convert into a real Andhra National University." The Andhra University Bill was ultimately passed.

Satyamurti's most important contribution during this budget session of the Council was his well-balanced views on communal representation. It was a question which loomed large in the discussions of the Council. Satyamurti who, of course, would not not leave an opportunity like this to express his views, started by saying: "I am afraid the position of a Brahmin in this Council, in a debate of this kind, is a very difficult and, really, a very delicate one." By saying that he was impelled to join in the debate, after hearing the speech of the Finance Member (Mr. Graham), Satyamurti questioned the theory of efficiency, as a fundamental criterion in services, put forth by the Finance Member and pointed out how, "any unbearded English youth can be sent to occupy any post" ... "whereas those born and bred up in this country are put down as wanting in efficiency." Mr. Graham, the Finance Member, though an English I.C.S. officer, was an exception to the general run of the tribe and his speech was a well-meaning one, as he boldly spoke out against communal representation. Satyamurti had obviously in mind the general policy pursued by the British administration in the matter of appointments and though Mr. Graham did not deserve the carping criticism of Satyamurti, his charge against the British administration, about their conception that Englishmen were superior in efficiency, was justified.

Satyamurti clearly declared his own views on the matter of communal representation: "I entirely agree," he said, "that as far as Government service is concerned, it ought not to be the monopoly of any particular community ... why should you lay down that... the heavens will fall if non-Brahmins got their adequate representation (in the services); the Nationalists are committed to it (the resolution on communal representation)

by conviction and persuasion that we must see to it that communities other than those already over-represented in the services must get adequate protection or promotion until the inequality is removed." He stressed, "after all we have got to live in this country, we have got to live as friends and as brothers." He called upon "friends on both sides of the House" to tackle the problem as statesmen, as sons of the same mother, and to remember that, after all, no community was going to get any extraordinary advancement by government service. "We are attaching exaggerated importance to Government service ... I am sure there is a lesson which each community will, sooner than we can imagine, learn, that Government service is not the salvation of any community." He concluded, "I want that all communities, Brahmins, non-Brahmins, Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, and Depressed Classes must join together in one mighty battle for winning Swaraj. That is why I support the appointment of a Committee." He made it clear by this that he was not opposed to the principle of communal representation in services, and justice should be done to the communities, who, till now, were poorly represented in the services.

Later, in the next year, Satyamurti had occasion to touch upon the communal question, in a quite different context. When the Andhra University Bill was introduced in October 1925, a small verbal amendment was moved by Sir K. V. Reddy, to substitute the word "Telugu" for "Andhra". In moving this amendment Sir Reddy declared, "Telugus have always been recognised as Dravidians" thereby imputing that the word "Andhras" implied Aryans. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, who supported the amendment, brought in the question of Aryan culture and Dravidian culture and asked which of them was going to be built up in the Andhra country. This provoked Satyamurti to retaliate strongly in his speech thus: "May I ask my honourable friend from Chingleput whether he knows that Aryan culture is not Brahmin culture, that the authors of the Upanishads were not Brahmins, King Janaka was not a Brahmin, and the Lord who gave us *The Gita*, the Shepherd Boy, was not a Brahmin and that

the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were not written by Brahmins. Let us consider and show by our votes that Brahmin hatred must stop at the Staff Selection Board and must not go further."

The question of communal representation came up in some form or other in almost every session of the Council and Satyamurti reiterated his views on every occasion.

The second year of the second session of the Madras Legislative Council saw Satyamurti's talents for debate, repartee, wit and powerful punches in his speeches, unfolding with greater brilliance. The 1925 session of the Council was marked by some very interesting episodes with Satyamurti as the star performer. During the discussion on the Civil Courts Bill, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar who was a seasoned politician and speaker, and one of the leading lights of the Justice Party, criticised the High Court in the matter of judicial appointments and characterised it as exercising its patronage improperly. He referred to Satyamurti's suggestion, made earlier, that if the patronage was vested in the Government, then the Government will be guided by their own surroundings in the Legislative Council, in which case, there might be the possibility of brothers, sons, sons-in-law, cousins, nephews, German cousins and all the rest of them...."

Satyamurti: "Who are the German cousins?"

A. R. Mudaliar: "My friend over there is a German cousin."

Satyamurti: "Then I too have a chance."

Ramaswami Mudaliar threw out a "friendly challenge" to "my honourable and learned friend over there, the member for the University, that they both go through the list of appointments made during five or six years by the High Court and have a list framed showing how many of these gentlemen are either cousins, sons-in-law and so forth to Executive Councillors, High Court Judges or Advocates-General etc.

Satyamurti intervened on a point of personal explanation signifying that he would be perfectly willing to accept the challenge thrown by the member from Chingleput.

A. R. Mudaliar: "I am not surprised at the interruption."

Satyamurti: "The honourable member is never surprised... I

am perfectly willing to take up the challenge. Only I will then move an amendment to the terms of reference to the Committee, that the Committee may also enquire into the number of Presidents and other members of local bodies that may have been appointed by the Ministry from among their friends and relations." (Laughter and applause).

Satyamurti also participated in the general discussion on the budget, during the second year of the Second Legislative Council. He began his speech with a sally against the Treasury Bench which was "more often empty than full". He made a detailed critical analysis of each department, Minister and Member of Council. No member of the Treasury Bench was spared by him. He concluded, "I may say, so long as Dyarchy continues and so long as really responsible government is not established, we are simply ploughing the sand here". No truer word was uttered. He also spoke on the various demands in the budget and moved or supported cut motions. One such interesting motion was when he moved that the allotment for the Governor's Bodyguard be omitted. He made some caustic remarks on the subject. "We consider the Governor's Bodyguard a relic of ancient days, when the European in this country thought that the Orientals could be governed only by the exhibition of splendour, that we are all primitive-minded people who would be impressed by the Governor going over the roads with bodyguards in front and behind him." He had a dig at the Home Member (Sir A. Knapp) : "I am sure if my hon. friend rides to this House accompanied by a bodyguard, we shall be much impressed."

A cut motion, to omit the Excise demand, gave Satyamurti another opportunity to attack the government on its excise policy, for its irresponsive attitude regarding Prohibition in spite of the resolution passed by the House recommending closure of liquor shops. He shot forth one of his usual quotations :

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey.

Where wealth is accumulated and men decay".

It was during this session of the Madras Legislative Council, that the controversial Hindu Religious Endowments Bill was

brought forward by the Rajah of Panagal. Satyamurti held strong views on the interference of the State in religious matters and religious institutions. He gave a devastating and spirited reply to Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer, a retired Judge of the High Court, and President of the Hindu Religious Endowments Board, who was nominated as a Special Member of the Council for the final re-enacting of the Hindu Religious Endowments Bill. Speaking after Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer, Satyamurti let go one of his emotional outbursts : "On a point of personal explanation, Sir, I did not want to rise to speak. But the honourable member mentioned my name, swore by his religion and Lord Krishna, and says I had the spirit of an actor in me. But, Sir, by the same Lord Krishna, and if he will allow me, by the same Hindu religion, I swear I never acted in expressing my sentiments here. It is unfair, unjust, and unsportsmanlike to say that I was acting... I do not want to say that the arts of an actor are necessary here. I swear that he is hopelessly wrong and that he has no right to swear by the Lord and his religion and call me an actor. In the name of religion he has no right to insult other members."

However later, while discussing the clause in the Hindu Religious Endowments Bill, providing for levy of contributions by religious institutions to the Hindu Religious Endowments Board, Satyamurti, surcharged with religious fervour, gave full play to his humour and sarcasm : "Now, Sir, we heard in the course of the discussion on other amendments, elaborate arguments given to us that Hindu institutions have been managed by persons other than Hindus and we have had a case quoted to us, a case in Mysore that Tippu Sultan managed the Sri Ranganatha Temple at Srirangapatnam Fort and that the Rajah of Panagal who holds a similar position by lineal succession and arrogates to himself the proper management of the Saivite and Vaishnavite Mutts, can tax all these temples and mutts, and he is justified in levying this tax. Sir, I have read history, and I have read the Hindu Dharma Shastras and I am yet to know... whether the Government or management of any temple, as the case may be, or whether any Hindu King, however bad and unpious he might have been,

ventured to ask God that he should be paid any tax, ... It seems to me, Sir, that if we are not clouded by party prejudice, every pious Hindu will raise his hand in horror when we say we are going to take away money from God ..." Then in the style of the ancient Rishis, like Durvasa, Vishwamitra, Vasishta and others he made this pronouncement : "We believe, Mr. President, that we will be ruined for seven generations if we take away the money of God." When discussion was resumed on the Bill, in August 1926, Satyamurti pursued his relentless opposition to it. Satyamurti made a strong plea for postponement of the Bill till after the next election which was coming off shortly, so that the electorate could have an opportunity to express their convictions on such an important issue. "Heavens will not fall" said Satyamurti, "if the matter was taken up after the election."

Referring to the "cynical and supercilious tone in which the Minister spoke in the matter", Satyamurti deprecated the attitude taken by the Minister whose Parthian Shot was, "we as a party are determined to go on with this Bill. Go and do your worst ! Go to the country and fight us." Satyamurti gave his Parthian Shot by giving one of his favourite (oft-repeated) challenges. "Remember, it is a game at which two can play."

Satyamurti would not let the Bill in peace. At every stage he raised his voice of opposition. During the second reading of the Bill, he moved several of the 475 amendments when it was taken up clause by clause and supported amendments moved by other members.

His main objections to the Bill were: that the Bill was rushed through in disregard of all parliamentary procedure, in not referring it to a Select Committee; inclusion of private mutts in the Bill; and an attempt to oust the jurisdiction of civil courts. In the end he said, "we have done our duty in fighting out the Bill. The opposition to the Bill is guided by the highest and purest of motives. We yield to none in our desire for the proper and effective management of our religious institutions. But we object and we object strongly to the attempt to bureaucratised our temple administration and placing mutts and temples at the mercy

of the Government. The opposition to this Bill is very much more non-Brahmin than Brahmin... I venture to say we have done our duty by our country, by our religion and by our electorate to the best of our lights."

The Bill was passed finally and it was a personal triumph for the Rajah of Panagal.

The enactment is still on the Statute Book and the law is very much alive. The law has been amended from time to time.

By the end of the Second Legislative Council, after the Montford Reforms, Satyamurti who had fought so vigorously in the Congress for council entry, had justified his stand by proving how, even the inadequate and unsatisfactory Montford Reforms, could be turned to advantage to further the national cause and check the British power which tried to sustain itself with the help of reactionary parties. He also justified Gandhiji's confidence in his ability when he said that if anybody should be sent to the Council to represent the Congress, Satyamurti alone was sufficient. His was the voice which rose above others in holding up the nation's prestige and self-respect within the confines of the Council.

He had made a mark, made his reputation and established himself as an able parliamentarian. It was not merely his debating capacity which distinguished him, but his thorough knowledge of parliamentary procedures and practices which he had studied so well and used so effectively. He could give points to older politicians and parliamentarians, and to the Treasury Bench he was a terror. He was justified in his claim that he knew more about rules of parliamentary procedure than some of the Ministers and Government Members.

Satyamurti was now a figure to be reckoned with. He not only made a mark in the political field and public life as an able legislator and parliamentarian but his talents were available for all good causes which required forceful advocacy. He was sought after for espousing and putting forward many just claims for justice and redressal of grievances. Whether it was the landholders' grievances of lawyers' demands or vakil clerks' plight, or post-

men's rights, Satyamurti readily took up their cause and fought for them.

In 1924, the Tanjore *mirasdars** were seriously affected by an enhanced rate of assessment of land revenue. They organised a protest movement and clamoured for redress. Satyamurti readily took up their cause ; he presided over a conference convened by *mirasdars* and held at Mayavaram. In his Presidential address he whipped up the spirits of the *mirasdars*, exhorted them to stand united and to organise themselves for a fight; but at the same time he advised them to first try to convince the Government that they could not really pay the enhanced *kist*. He strongly supported their move to refuse to pay the enhanced tax.

In those days there were not many organised trade unions of workers and labour which could effectively represent or put forth the cause of the workers. Satyamurti took an active interest in organising the workers and labour and he participated in the conferences organised by the various groups and associations connected with labour. He identified himself with the interests of workers and labour and spoke out for them ; he tried to redress their grievances and improve their conditions, both in the Legislative Council and outside. His voice was more effective than slogans and heroic resolutions.

* *mirasdars* : landlords

Voice Across the Seas

THE MOVEMENT FOR attaining Swaraj gained a new momentum when Gandhiji entered the arena and became the acknowledged leader of the Congress and the country. His Non-co-operation and Satyagraha Movements roused the people to an awareness and consciousness hitherto unknown and unparalleled in its dimensions. While the country was seething with discontent and national consciousness was roused to a high pitch, very little was known in the outside world about the real state of affairs in India and the new spirit of revolt based on an unique technique of non-violence and Satyagraha under the leadership of Gandhiji. The world was ignorant of the new mood of the nation and the great upsurge of national feeling. Few among politicians even in England could appreciate what the Congress stood for and why there was a wave of revolt in the country.

It was, therefore, keenly felt by discerning politicians in India and patriotic Indians abroad that the world should know what was actually happening in India and what was ailing the nation. The need for effective propaganda abroad, especially in England, was keenly felt among those who were fighting for the freedom of the country. From the start, Satyamurti had been one of those who laid much store by propaganda outside India. His first visit to England in 1919, when he joined the Indian delegation led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, proved how necessary and useful propaganda abroad would be in enlightening the people of other countries, especially England, who had false ideas and wrong notions about India and who were misled by the one-sided garbled accounts emanating from the British

authorities and diehards. Satyamurti's first visit to England was recognised on all hands, particularly by British politicians who were sympathetic towards the Indian cause, as invaluable service rendered by his eloquent presentation of the Indian cause to the British audiences.

Now again, after the Montford Reforms and Mahatma Gandhi's first great movement, the need was felt for good, effective propaganda to dispel the ignorance and wrong notions of the British people. Satyamurti felt the time had come when propaganda for the Indian cause should be organised immediately and he was pressing the Congress to organise its foreign propaganda wing. He was not alone in arguing the need for propaganda abroad. Shri V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, who was then considered a Moderate and who was in close touch with British politics and politicians, expressed his view strongly that propaganda in England should be taken up in right earnest. Dr. Tarakanath Das wrote from New York supporting Satyamurti's stand and he felt that Indian propaganda should be organised immediately in America, England, Egypt and Japan. He came forward and offered to be the representative of the Congress in America.

Ultimately it was agreed by the Congress leaders that Satyamurti would be the fittest person to be entrusted with propagating the Congress standpoint in England. Meanwhile, British friends in England were also eager to get a person of the talent and capacity of Satyamurti, to explain to their people the Indian point of view and enlighten them on the true situation in India. The Independent Labour Party in England welcomed the move to send Satyamurti again to England and the Party undertook the responsibility of organising his tour in England. The Party arranged for a programme of lectures by Satyamurti for about six weeks, during which period he would cover England, Scotland and Wales.

Satyamurti left for England in June 1925 on his second propaganda mission to that country. Explaining to pressmen, on the eve of his departure, the purpose of his visit to England, Satyamurti made it clear that the main object of his tour was to do propaganda work on behalf of the Swarajya Party, as there was

a good deal of misapprehension in England about the aims and aspirations of the Party. His object, he said, was to explain and bring home to the British public that the Swarajists who were the "best disciplined, most organised and most popular political party in India" were fighting for Swaraj with the weapons placed in their hands by the Britishers themselves and they proposed to carry on the fight until their object was obtained.

As soon as Satyamurti landed in England in the third week of June, he had a heavy programme. A series of meetings was arranged by the Independent Labour Party. He first addressed meetings in Newport, Cardiff and other places in South Wales. In Birmingham a meeting was arranged by Rev. John Lewis of the East Birmingham Labour Church, who had been evincing great sympathy for the Indian cause. Satyamurti returned to London on 19th July, when he heard the news of the death of Desabandhu C. R. Das. Though he was not unprepared for it, as the Desabandhu had been seriously ill for some time, yet it was a great shock to him. A few days before he left Madras for England, he had a most touching and intimate letter from Das, in which the latter had said he expected to be called away at any moment. In his tribute to his leader, Satyamurti said : "Since 1917, I have had the privilege of working intimately with him and I know how clear, perspicacious and far-seeing his intellect was. Especially in the difficult and anxious days when the Swarajya Party was being formed, Das stood four square to all the winds that blew, and helped the Party to achieve the position it has now achieved."

The untimely death of Desabandhu Das on June 16, 1925 was not only an irreparable loss to the Swarajya Party, but to the Congress and the whole nation. Satyamurti attended a memorial meeting arranged by the Indian Students' Hostel in London under the presidentship of Col. Wedgewood. Satyamurti was called upon to speak. Satyamurti described his feelings later thus : "The sorrow of Das's recent death was too personal and intimate for me to make any speech. I merely contented myself to appealing to the large number of Indian young men to join the Swarajya Party

when they got back to India and show the Government that Das dead was as strong as Das living."

This was the one occasion when even Satyamurti could not find adequate expression to his feelings. While in London, Satyamurti visited the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. He was so provoked by the poor show put up in the Indian Pavilion, that he observed, "The very idea of imitating the Taj could have been formed only by an inartistic vandal.... After you enter the Pavilion your pain grows more intense as you see the crude attempts to exhibit India as a country producing mainly curios. The Indian Pavilion is nothing but a glorified collection of Indian bazars where some very ordinary stuff is being sold by merchants." Satyamurti's artistic temperament revolted against crudity, distortion and ugliness.

When Satyamurti arrived in England, T. C. Goswami, another able and eminent Indian nationalist and a powerful speaker, was there already and he was of great help and encouragement to Satyamurti. Curiously enough, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar — with whom Satyamurti had crossed swords in India — joined him in addressing meetings at Birmingham. "While at home we may fight with one another in politics; away from home we find strange bed-fellows. We make common cause in keeping high our national honour by joining hands in fighting a common alien foe," said Satyamurti. In his despatch to "The Hindu", Madras, from London, Satyamurti wrote: "Let not our readers rub their eyes; thereby hangs a tale. Mr. Ramaswamy Mudaliar's stay in England has converted him and he holds the view very strongly that unless we join forces in India immediately, no progress can or will be made."

The salubrious climate of England seemed to have worked a miracle and brought the two inveterate political opponents together on the same platform.

When Satyamurti was in London he had the opportunity of watching the debate on India in the Parliament. Satyamurti was in the Dominion Gallery in the House of Commons along with Sir Atul Chatterji (High Commissioner), Sir Prabhasankar Pattani,

T. C. Goswami and Dewan Chamanlal; the debate on India lasted seven hours. Colonel Wedgewood and Ramsay MacDonald of the Labour Party, who had sympathy for the Indian cause, took part in the debate. (Satyamurti also attended the House of Lords during the Indian debate.) In an article in the "Daily Herald", Satyamurti expressed his dissatisfaction and disappointment with their speeches. He criticised them for paying lip sympathy to India's right to rule herself, and for their wanting India to co-operate with the British in evolving self-rule for India, by working the Reforms. Satyamurti pointed out how there was no honourable basis for co-operation as between equals. "India today, is at the crossways," he said, "fairly dealt with, she will attain her freedom by peaceful means and make a powerful contribution to establish peace on earth and goodwill to all men." This evoked appreciation and compliment from Labour Party leaders like Rountree, who said "such articles as Mr. Satyamurti's are of the greatest value"; he regretted the British Press failed to give much information about India or the Indian point of view.

The speech of Lord Birkenhead (who was Secretary of State for India) in the House of Lords drew a sharp criticism from Satyamurti. "The mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse. This practically summarises the result of Lord Birkenhead's long-awaited effort in the House of Lords. Those who were anticipating far-reaching announcements one way or the other had their hopes blighted at the outset of his speech when he declared that no final conclusions had been arrived at about anything and he had nothing more to give than his own impression". He clearly set forth how Dyarchy had been proved unworkable and how it was impossible for his Party to submit to Dyarchy and work it, as Colonel Wedgewood wanted to. To the question what they (Swarajya Party) wanted, Satyamurti answered back, "We want that Indians should be in India what Englishmen are in England. We want to rule ourselves."

Satyamurti visited Oxford with Prof. F. E. Corley of the Madras Christian College. He was impressed with the tutorial system of education in vogue in the Oxford University. Satyamurti,

who was a keen student of literature and had a live interest in Drama, took the opportunity of visiting Stratford-on-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare, who, he said, was "the greatest Englishman for me and the poet who has guaranteed immortality for the English language." He saw the house in which the great poet was born, and the museum in it, Anne Hathaway's cottage, the memorial theatre, the church where he was buried and the grammar school where he studied. He also saw "a beautiful performance" of *As You Like It* at the Memorial Theatre. "I visited the place as a pilgrim from Suguna Vilasa Sabha" of Madras. (Satyamurti was an active member of this amateur dramatic association and took part in many of the plays produced by the Sabha in English, Tamil and Sanskrit).

Satyamurti also attended the sittings of the World Federation of Educational Associations as a representative of the Madras University. Even there, he lost no opportunity to voice forth strongly the Indian point of view. He drove it home by saying, "so long as Clive and Nelson are put forward as the heroes of a nation, rather than Shakespeare and Milton, international understanding could not be promoted." He urged that children of all nations should be taught to love peace, to hate war, and to respect other nations. His speech was well received by the international audience.

During his two months' tour of England, Satyamurti did not lose a single moment in idle sight-seeing or diverting himself with other kinds of activities, as many Indians were—and are—tempted to do when they are sent on deputation or on a mission. He utilised every minute of his time in canvassing support for the Indian cause. He addressed thirty meetings all over England, Scotland and Wales. The meetings were mostly organised by the Independent Labour Party of England. He also addressed several summer schools, held under the auspices of the ILP, and these gatherings comprised the cream of the Party drawn from all over the country. He cashed in the support of some of the most popular and influential papers, like the "National Herald," the "Forward", the "Manchester Guardian", the "Flame" (organ

of ILP Youth League), the "Birmingham Town Crier", the "Northern Voice" and other papers, by contributing articles about the Sawarajya Party, his impressions and his experiences. He got into touch with leading politicians of the ILP and even Conservatives (whose attitude he found was one of absolute negation) and he held discussions with them. Everyone with whom he came into contact was profoundly impressed with him and the manner in which he presented India and her case. This being the main purpose of his visit, he did not waste his time and energy in indulging in other fissiparous activities.

He also addressed meetings of youth and students. One such meeting was of the Union of Welsh University Students in London.

After fulfilling his mission in his whirlwind tour of eight weeks, Satyamurti returned to India in August as a conquering hero ; he had conquered the minds of the intelligentsia in England. In England resolutions were passed at citizens' meetings, workers' meetings and other similar meetings pledging their support to the Indian cause. An announcement was made by the National Club that Satyamurti was made a Supernumerary Member of the Club.

In India, the appreciative reaction to Satyamurti's successful mission was voiced forth by A. Rangaswami Iyengar, a veteran journalist, in a letter to him.

With laurels and encomiums showered on him both in England and later in India, Satyamurti successfully paved the way for a better appreciation and understanding of India in England.

Back to the Home Front

WHEN SATYAMURTI RETURNED to India in August 1925, after his successful tour of England, he found that things had moved fast at home. S. Srinivasa Iyengar had come out into the field and he wanted to reorient the Congress under his leadership. Till now, C. Rajagopalachari was the undisputed leader in the south. He was concentrating on the constructive programme of Khadi, removal of Untouchability and Prohibition. Srinivasa Iyengar wanted to revitalise the political side of the Congress. He wanted to get ready from then on for the elections in 1926, with a view to capturing the legislatures by the Congress. During Satyamurti's brief absence in England, Srinivasa Iyengar consolidated his position. Earlier, he had opposed the policy pursued by the Swarajya Party in the Council by allying himself with the Nationalists and there were serious differences of opinion between him and Satyamurti. But now he wanted Satyamurti on his side, as he knew what an useful ally he would have in him. Satyamurti was keeping in touch with Srinivasa Iyengar while he was in England. He assured Srinivasa Iyengar of his full co-operation. Expressing his happiness over this assurance, Srinivasa Iyengar wrote to him in London and in this letter (August 6, 1925) he clarified his own views. "In the first place, I am wholly against caste in politics. I am for an honest nationalism and real unity and not for any stupid pact, which only perpetuates caste in politics and services." Writing to Satyamurti on the cause of differences between them, Srinivasa Iyengar said, "The whole trouble between us has been due solely to your unwillingness to accept my leadership in never more than name and that too not always."

During Satyamurti's absence in England, Srinivasa Iyengar gained dominance in the Swarajya Party and he virtually took charge of it. The way he went about organising for the elections, without consulting or seeking the co-operation of the other leaders gave the impression that he was trying to assert his own leadership. A. Rangaswami Iyengar in his letter to Satyamurti tried to put him wise about Srinivasa Iyengar's "manoeuvres" to ignore other leaders and conduct the Party in his own way. Rangaswami Iyengar also tried to put off, until Satyamurti's return, the election meeting of the Swarajya Party which Srinivasa Iyengar had called, but he could not succeed. Rangaswami Iyengar warned Satyamurti to be wary in his dealings with Srinivasa Iyengar. There was an obvious tug of war between Srinivasa Iyengar and Rangaswami Iyengar to wean away Satyamurti from the other.

On his return from England, Satyamurti met Srinivasa Iyengar and they came closer together. Srinivasa Iyengar told Satyamurti he could address the election meetings to be held almost every day and explain the Swarajya Party's aims and politics. From then on Satyamurti became the main prop and right hand man of Srinivasa Iyengar, to the great chagrin of other Congress leaders.

Satyamurti continued to beat the big drum for the Swarajya Party on public platforms and the Press, in his own inimitable way, which was forthright and telling.

Writing in the "Bombay Samachar", on October 17, 1925 of the aims and policies of the Swarajya Party, Satyamurti traced the events leading up to the formation of the Party and how the Party tried to rescue the Congress from the bog into which it had got consequent on the boycott of councils. He showed how this policy of boycott pursued by the Congress facilitated reactionary parties to get into power and do their work. He explained the two essentials of the Swarajya Party's programme viz : non-acceptance of office under present conditions in the Provincial Councils and in the Central Assembly and ventilating grievances. "Our programme" elucidated Satyamurti, "is based on a study of human psychology, the psychology of our nation and the psychology of the British... Our people can have no

faith in easy or time-serving politics. They believe in men who boldly and manfully fight the bureaucracy, in a spirit of self-sacrifice... We believe that our programme of resistance in the Councils, to be supplemented, if necessary, by mass action outside, is the most effective programme before the country."

Fresh from his successful propaganda tour in England, Satyamurti resumed his fight in the Council, which was in its last session during 1926. Though he was fighting a lone battle inside the Council, he did not lose heart and he pursued with vigour his sallies against the Ministry and Government. In the autumn session of the Council, he moved an adjournment motion to condemn the action of the Government in disqualifying Yakub Hassan, a veteran Congress Muslim, from standing for election. Yakub Hassan, along with several others, had been convicted for sedition and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Satyamurti argued like a seasoned lawyer on the constitutional aspects by pointing out that a man cannot be punished for the same offence twice. Referring contemptuously to the "other side" of the House, meaning the Ministerialists and their supporters, Satyamurti was in one of his best forms: "If I may express myself freely", he said, "I feel that the political opinions of several hon. members on the other side are so primitive, so barbarous, so obscurantist, that they do not deserve to be members of any legislature". A ripple of laughter was heard from the "other side"; Satyamurti knew how to silence them. He twitted them: "They laugh because they know not their own faults. Because their political opinions are based on communalism and reaction, they think they can sit tight in the saddle...".

He challenged: "Let the constituents judge between me and them, let us fight out the matter, let them say whether your views or mine are so laughable. You are not the men to laugh at me or to laugh me out; go to the electorate".

One of the Ministerialists threw a counter-challenge and said "choose another electorate." Satyamurti was quick with the retort. "I am afraid my honourable friend will learn decorum neither from you nor from me."

R.K. (7/11)

Satyamurti had proved his mettle as a parliamentarian during the three years of his career as a legislator. Besides contributing to the discussions and debates by his lively speeches, quick repartees and sharp and fearless criticism of the government and Ministry, he put perhaps the largest number of questions on all kinds of subjects, ranging from agriculture, taxation, increase in number of High Court Judges, Empire Exhibition, jails, floods, races, hydro-electric schemes, potato farms, slaughter of cattle and a variety of other matters of public interest. During the three-year period of the Council over 700 questions stood in his name. In August 1924 alone, 160 questions were put by him. He became a pastmaster in putting supplementary questions and he was nicknamed "Supplemurti".

He moved cut motions during the budget demands and that gave him more opportunities to attack and expose the Government on specific issues. He moved adjournment motions on such topics as the Governor's initiative in making appointments, Salt tax, Religious Endowments Bill and the conduct of the Chief Minister in issuing a whip.

At the end of the second session of the Madras Legislative Council — and his first term as a member of the Council — Satyamurti had come out as a triumphant hero. True, there might not have been any substantial achievement politically, but it cannot be gainsaid that at least the Ministerialists and Government were always on pins, and Satyamurti had proved a terror to them. But for him, the Ministry and the Government would have gone on merrily and comfortably on their career of self-aggrandisement. He paved the road for the Congress and nationalist forces to walk over the reactionary parties, in the next election. Satyamurti was able to focus public attention on important matters, and rouse a feeling of responsible political awareness. In this respect, Satyamurti's contribution to political education and enlightenment was great. When the Second Madras Legislative Council was prorogued on September 17, 1926 Satyamurti came out in flying colours, having made a name for himself as an able debater, powerful orator and an irrepressible opponent and critic of Government.

The Third Council and Second Phase

DURING THE YEAR 1924 dark clouds had gathered over the political horizon. C. R. Das had passed away, and Mahatma Gandhi, who had been released unconditionally on February 5, after undergoing a serious operation for appendicitis, was still in political retirement, concentrating on his constructive programme of Khadi, removal of Untouchability, abolition of the drink evil and such other activities. The Swarajya Party, which had now gained the political status of functioning as a part of the Congress, was itself under the process of disintegration. A powerful coterie of distinguished leaders, like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar had started a new theory of "Responsive Co-operation", which in effect contemplated acceptance of office with a view to utilising the opportunity to advantage, in furthering the nationalist cause. The Swarajists under the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru were opposed to the new theory of Responsiveness and there was an imminent danger of a rift among the council-entry Congressmen. Attempts to patch up the differences proved abortive. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya formed a new party under the name of the "Independent Party", consisting of all those elements who were prepared to accept Dominion Status as their goal and Responsive Co-operation as their policy. The Lion of Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai, also joined the new Party.

Communalism again reared its head and Hindu-Muslim unity, which was brought about by Gandhiji, was going on the rocks. With the suspension of the non-co-operation movement by Mahatma Gandhi in 1922, there was a lull in active political work.

Reactionaries and communalists, both among Hindus and Muslims, found the field clear and fertile for fomenting trouble, violence, riot and fighting between the two communities. Many Muslim leaders deserted the Swarajya Party and the Congress and there was confusion and disintegration among the nationalist forces.

It was in this atmosphere of confusion, disunity and infighting that the new elections were announced. The elections to the Central Assembly and Provincial Councils were held in November 1926. The Swarajya Party, which had been authorised by the Belgaum Congress, under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi, to contest elections on behalf of the Congress, fought the elections in the name of the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi blessed the Swarajya Party and erstwhile no-changers gave full support to the Swarajya Party. The Swarajya Party was thus enabled to gather strength in fighting the elections. Ultimately, it gained considerable success, bagging 40 out of the 104 seats in the Central Assembly. In Madras, the Party came out with flying colours capturing nearly half of the seats and becoming the largest single party in the Council. The Party managed to hold its ground in Bihar and Orissa but did not fare so well in Bombay and Bengal. In U.P., Punjab and Central Province, the Party suffered bad defeats.

The Congress session was held in Gauhati, in December, soon after the elections, under the presidentship of S. Srinivasa Iyengar. In his Presidential Address, Srinivasa Iyengar lauded the Swarajya Party for the big successes in the elections. He disapproved strongly office acceptance. Srinivasa Iyengar, who had always differed ideologically from Mahatma Gandhi, disapproved mixing religion with politics and had never subscribed to the basic principle of non-violence being adopted as a creed of the Congress.

The Congress passed a resolution directing Congressmen not to accept ministership or any other office so long as a satisfactory response was not made by the Government to the national demand. Within the legislatures, Congressmen were asked to oppose and

throw out all attempts at legislation to consolidate bureaucracy and, on the positive side, Congressmen were asked to move resolutions and support measures to promote the healthy growth of national life.

In Madras, the Swarajya Party being the single largest party, was invited to form the ministry. The Party which was under Srinivasa Iyengar's leadership, declined the invitation. Satyamurti gave the reason for this stand and said, "under Dyarchy there is no power, initiative or responsibility for ministers." The Justice Party was practically routed and had now no strength to form a ministry. So the Independents, who were the next largest group, were offered the ministry. Dr. P. Subbaroyan, who had got elected as an Independent, agreed to form the ministry and with other Independents a ministry was formed. The men who were chosen as ministers were A. Ranganatha Mudaliar, a Theosophist and a retired Deputy Collector, and R. N. Arokiyasami Mudaliar, a Roman Catholic Christian who had retired as a Superintending Engineer in P.W.D. The Swarajya Party, emboldened by its strength put up for Presidentship of the Council. C.V.S. Narasimha Raju, leader of the Party, and he was unanimously elected as President.

The first session of the Third Madras Legislative Council under the Montford Reforms began its sittings in December 1926. The first budget session of the new Council began in March 1927. Satyamurti opened the first fire on the Government in the general discussion of the budget. He started with the location of the Council chamber and, in his characteristic style, flayed the Government with devastating sarcasm: "I do not know if it is by design or accident", he began, "that the Chambers where the Madras Legislative Council meets, were built in the Fort St. George, but undoubtedly it serves a very good purpose. Morning after morning as we walk or drive up to these Chambers, we see the machine guns and military troops stationed here forcibly, reminding us that in spite of these paraphernalia of our reformed legislatures, the ministers, this Dyarchy, in spite of all our budget discussions and our voting on the budget, today, as in the days

of John Co., British rule in this country is a military tyranny which is tolerated only because the people cannot help it and that all these paraphernalia have not changed the real steel which sits tight over the people of this country."

He explained the Swarajya Party's policy thus : "...It may be asked why is it then that we are here doing the Sysiphian task, knowing all the time that we shall end where we began... It is because we believe that by our work here we can create an atmosphere of resistance throughout the country, which will make the Britishers feel its presence, that we are here...". Satyamurti concluded with one of his characteristic perorations : "We feel under Dyarchy there is no power or responsibility for ministers. however well-intentioned they may be. I say, as to the new occupants of these offices, they are merely to carry out the wishes of unseen powers..."

The Swarajya Party and Nationalist Party walked out during the budget session, but attended the session of the Council in July to participate in the debate on some important bills coming up before the Council.

The Justice Party, which was chafing under its election defeat, sought the earliest opportunity to show its displeasure towards the new ministry. During the first budget session of the new Third Madras Legislative Council, in March 1927, the Justice Party brought in a cut motion during the Excise demand.

At the beginning, the Swarajya Party had assumed an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the new ministry formed by Dr. P. Subbaroyan. Satyamurti, who spoke on the cut motion on the Excise demand moved by the Justice Party, made his party's position clear about Prohibition. (It was on this issue the Justice Party had moved the cut motion ; curiously enough, the Justice Party which would not do anything to promote the cause of Prohibition, now condemned the successor ministry for not sponsoring Prohibition).

Satyamurti twitted the Justice Party on its present attitude in bringing the cut motion. He said : "So far as we of the Congress Party in this House are concerned, we have a clear and clean

conscience in this matter. We stood for Prohibition; we will always stand for Prohibition..." Exposing the Justice Party's motives he asked, "what did they do when they were in power for six years? They fought Prohibition, tooth and nail, and today like angry schoolboys deprived of their toys, because they believed they alone had the right to have them, they are weeping..... On the question of Prohibition, they are not with us, they were not with us, they will never be with us.... I like Swaraj, I like Prohibition, but I like one thing more than Swaraj and Prohibition and that is honesty in public life.....". The cut motion was defeated.

In the second session of the Legislative Council in August 1927, the Justice Party brought a no-confidence motion against the Subbaroyan Ministry. Satyamurti supported the motion. In his speech, Satyamurti referred to the unequivocal condemnation of Dyarchy by the Justice Party leaders, Dewan Bahadur Krishnan Nair and the Rajah of Panagal and he heartily associated with them in their condemnation of Dyarchy. He also criticised the Finance Member's attitude for his praise of the Ministry and its supporters. He explained his and the Party's position in supporting the no-confidence motion against the Ministry thus: "Last time we did not vote with the Justice Party to defeat this Ministry; we said we would not change our attitude, unless they assured us that they would not accept office until Dyarchy goes. They have taken us at our word and said 'We will throw out the ministry; we will not accept their places; and will prevent Dyarchy being worked in Madras'...."

Then, referring to the Finance Member's observation that the Swarajya Party have never worked Dyarchy and, therefore, they are incompetent to pronounce opinion on the workability of Dyarchy, Satyamurti smashed the argument by an apt simile: "It is like saying that you have not got upon the pinnacle of this fort, fallen down and broken your limbs and so you cannot speak on the law of gravity". Then he turned his guns on Arokiyasami Mudaliar, Minister, who had: "referred in a light-hearted manner to the Triple Boycott and its failure." He said, prophetically,

“but the last page in history has not yet been written and it may be given to Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress to write it and show that freedom can be won by non-violent non-co-operation.” He did not, however, live to see the fulfilment of his prophecy, unfortunately. Then he gave praise when it was due and conceded that the present ministry was an improvement on the last ministry and had done some laudable things to their credit.

Turning back again to the Justice Party, he doubted their change of heart and quoted from Edwin Arnold’s “Light of Asia” and addressed the very first sermon that Lord Buddha preached to his disciples :

*Ye suffer from yourselves,
None else compels ;
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel and hug and kiss
Its spokes of agony,
Its name of nothingness.*

The no-confidence motion was, however, lost by a narrow majority and the Subbaroyan Ministry was saved for the time being.

Soon, things came to a pass in such a way that the Swarajya Party had not only to withdraw its friendliness to the Ministry, but to actively vote against it. The two events which led to the change of attitude towards the Ministry by the Swarajya Party was the arrival of the Simon Commission (against which there was such unanimous opposition from all parties, except parties like the Justice Party which had chosen to please the British overlords and support the repressive policy of the Government against the Congress). The second event was the intense repressive policy which the Government adopted to suppress the Congress.

On November 8, 1927 the British Government announced the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon with seven members, all of them being English. There was all-round criticism and opposition to the Commission and the National Liberal Federation and the

Hindu Mahasabha decided not to have anything to do with the Commission. The Muslim Conference held under the Presidentship of Jinnah decided to boycott the Commission.

The Indian National Congress, which held its annual session in Madras in December 1927, under the Presidentship of Dr. M. A. Ansari, declared that the Commission had been appointed in utter disregard of India's right of self-determination and resolved to boycott the Commission. It called upon the people of India to organise hartals and mass demonstrations on the day of arrival of the Commission in India. The goal of India was declared as "complete national independence" replacing "Dominion Status". Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just returned from a tour of the Soviet Union and Europe, came back with fresh ideas inspired by his visit to Russia. He was one of those who strongly urged the declaration of the goal of the Indian people as complete independence. Mahatma Gandhi, who had been ill, did not attend the Madras session of the Congress. Leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Pandit Motilal Nehru unequivocally condemned the Commission.

In the Madras Legislative Council, a resolution disapproving of the Statutory Commission and refusing to co-operate with it was moved on January 23, 1928. Besides objecting to the personnel of the Commission, the Congress had expressed itself strongly that India should have the right of self-determination, and that no other country had a right to impose a constitution on India, nor decide about the method of constitutional progress, and that a Constituent Assembly should be set up by India itself to frame its constitution.

Moir, the Finance Member of the Madras Government, opposed the motion against the Simon Commission. Replying to Moir, Satyamurti slashed at the British Government and Lord Birkenhead, who was the Secretary of State for India. Moir's speech gave Satyamurti yet another opportunity for his biting sarcasm. Referring to Moir, he said: "He was aghast — scandalised by the very idea of any member of this House — a mere member of a subject race, which his countrymen conquered, getting up and

saying 'we will make the Parliament accept our Constitution'..... We may remember that nothing is ever given to any nation voluntarily by its rulers, nor its right to self-government ever recognised except at the point of the bayonet by the British. As for that let Canada answer; let South Africa answer; let New Zealand answer; and last but not least, let the United States of America answer." Again referring to Moir, Satyamurti continued "He represents no reason, no arguments, no logic and no sentiments except the British poison gas, and the British bayonet and it is these which make him laugh all the time... But I want him to know he laughs best who laughs last..." (Another oft-repeated favourite expression of Satyamurti). Finally, turning to Birkenhead again, Satyamurti said in an impassioned tone, "But what rankles in our heart is Lord Birkenhead's insolent speeches; his reference to the dissensions in the country, and his contemptuous reference to us, which only a proud member of an arrogant race, too proud of its power and too unmindful of the sensibilities of another nation, can make..... But if he is going to insolently challenge us 'Do you want us to withdraw?' we still say 'Yes, we will dare'. We have no enemies in the world. England has no friends. Go to France; go to Germany; Afghanistan; China; go anywhere, the name of your country stinks in the nostrils of the people of the world. Yet you are the people to fight us."

Satyamurti twitted the British Premier Stanley Baldwin for his speech and replied to it: "He said, 'If God wants a particularly hard thing to be done, he tells it to the Englishman.' I know the Englishman's self-complacency. But even I was surprised at this presumptuous statement, of an Englishman whose country has given us a Clive, a Warren Hastings, a General Neill, a General Dyer and the authors of the Mappila tragedy; the statement seems to be particularly blasphemous". In his final peroration he declared "We have faith in ourselves; we have faith in our country; we have faith in God. And therefore we do not fear our fate too much... Our desserts are not small. We dare put it to the test to win or lose it all, believing that India's right will triumph over the might of Great Britain."

The resolution disapproving of the Simon Commission and refusing co-operation with it was passed by a majority.

A curious situation was created when the Governor insisted on the Ministers co-operating with the Commission in spite of the resolution passed by the Council. While Dr. P. Subbaroyan, the Chief Minister, was prepared to bow to the wishes of the Governor, the other two Ministers, R. N. Arokiyasami and A. Ranganatha Mudaliar refused to obey the mandate of the Governor and resigned. Immediately after their resignation there was a cut motion on the Excise demand (March 15, 1928). The question of total Prohibition was again brought up. Dr. P. Subbaroyan, the Chief Minister, argued that total Prohibition was a Central subject and the enforcement procedure also was a Central subject. Satyamurti expressed his resentment at the attitude of the Chief Minister. "The bombshell thrown in this House", he said, "by my honourable friend the Sole Minister" (this was a dig at Subbaroyan who was left alone after the resignation of the other two ministers) "has lifted the controversy out of all the ordinary amenities of debate. What is the tom-foolery of our friend the Sole Minister getting up and saying that he is administering Excise, that he can poison the people, make them drink, but cannot stop them drink. It is an insult to the self-respect of the House. A Minister who makes that statement does not deserve to be minister at all. It is for the House to let him clear out..... If he will not, let us send him out..."

The cut motion was defeated ; the irony of the situation was that the Justice Party, which moved the cut motion, voted against it.

The Simon Commission landed in India on February 3, 1928. Complete hartal was observed throughout the country on that day and black flag demonstrations held. In Madras, demonstrations and processions and public meetings were held but the police interfered and tried to disperse the crowds by use of force. Several people were injured. Firing was resorted to by the police near the High Court and three persons died as a result of the firing.

But the hartal was a complete success in Madras, as in other parts of the country.

Srinivasa Iyengar, Satyamurti, Andhra Kesari T. Prakasam and other leaders exhorted the people to boycott the Commission.

In Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai led a big demonstration and the police lathi-charged the demonstrators. The Lion of Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai, was injured in the lathi charge and he never recovered from the injury and died, falling a martyr to the cause. In Lucknow, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru led the demonstration and was also injured by police lathi charge and violence.

The boycott-demonstrations against the Simon Commission were a complete success all over the country. But disregarding the mass resentment against it, the Commission began touring the country, trying to canvass support from the loyal supporters of British power.

The Madras Legislative Council which was prorogued in the beginning of 1928, met again in a new session in September 1928. Sir Norman Marjoribanks, Home Member and Leader of the House, brought in a motion proposing the appointment of seven representatives of the House to appear before the Simon Commission to give evidence. The resolution was in direct contravention of the previous resolution not to co-operate with the Commission. The admissibility of the motion by the Government Member was questioned. At that stage, Satyamurti moved an adjournment motion to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, viz. the action of the Government regarding the South Indian Railway strike. Even from the start, the President of the Council pulled up Satyamurti, calling him to order. There was a passage at arms between him and the President and ultimately in sheer disgust Satyamurti sat down saying "We may not bring the motion."

Satyamurti was active, as usual, during the Budget debate in the Council, during March-April 1928. He criticised the Revenue policy of the Government. In his usual impassioned manner he remarked: "If ever the long-suffering people of this country come to feel that the British yoke is intolerable and they must put it

aside, it will not be so much by the agitation of agitators like myself, but by the country's sense of anger which the British Government has provoked but done nothing to alleviate." Participating in the discussion on the demand under General Administration, Satyamurti began with a scathing reference to Sir Norman Marjoribanks, also the Revenue Member, who was his constant target : "Sir George Meredith defined cynicism as intellectual dandyism without the coxcomb's feathers. I think that description suits the honourable Revenue Member excellently. Well, he has no coxcomb feather, he is a cynic..."

Referring to V. I. Muniswamy Pillai's plea for removing social evils, Satyamurti said : "This is arguing in a vicious circle." This reminds me of the story of the insane man who was told that he will not get married unless he got sane and he will not get sane unless he got married and the man got neither married nor sane."

Adverting to the re-formation of the Ministry, after the resignation of two members, Satyamurti flayed Dr. Subbaroyan for the manner in which the latter had acted contrary to constitutional principles. "I want to ask him" (Dr. Subbaroyan), he said, "as a student of the great British Constitution" (Dr. Subbaroyan was a Bar-at-Law) "what becomes of joint responsibility if he gets two of his colleagues dismissed or they resign and he gets two other people from no party... Therefore if the Hon. Member can get a following of two he can become Minister..."

During the discussion on the Demand for Police, Abha Ali Khan had made some derogatory remarks about khaddar which was recommended for uniforms. Satyamurti gave a slashing reply : "Buffoonery and poltroonery cannot go far. My hon. friend has performed a theatrical performance. I am sure it was intended to awaken the slumber of hon. members."

Question time was always Satyamurti's meat — and his play-field — wherein he gave a full display of his ability. During the sessions, Dr. Subbaroyan was the new target for his questions. One such instance was when Satyamurti pilloried Dr. Subbaroyan on the question of the latter having issued instructions to the

Government departments to prepare material for giving evidence before the Simon Commission, in contravention of the resolution of the Council not to co-operate with the Commission. When Dr. Subbaroyan gave evasive non-committal answers, Satyamurti would not leave him and plied him with supplementary questions. The verbal passage at arms between Satyamurti and the Chief Minister was interesting.

In answer to Satyamurti's question whether the Chief Minister had issued instructions to the Government departments to prepare material for giving evidence before the Simon Commission, Dr. Subbaroyan replied: "when the time arrives for such consideration I shall decide what to do."

Satyamurti: "May I take it that the First Minister has not yet made up his mind in the matter?"

Dr. Subbaroyan: "What I said does not imply that".

Satyamurti: "May I know what it does imply?"

Dr. Subbaroyan: "The Hon. Member knows the English language as well as I do."

Satyamurti: "I am sorry my Hon. friend's English is beyond me."

Finally, after a lot of parrying on the part of Dr. Subbaroyan and relentless pursuing by Satyamurti the latter was able to extract an "yes" to his question from the former.

Satyamurti: "I am thankful to the Minister for this answer. He might have given it a few moments ago and much to my benefit, to your benefit and the benefit of this House."

There were many such occasions when Satyamurti revelled in supplementaries and extracted the answers he wanted.

Satyamurti pursued the question of Prohibition in every session and availed of every opportunity that offered itself. Besides his speech on the Excise Policy in the Budget debate, he put questions and supplementaries on the question and criticised the Government on its lukewarm policy on the question of Prohibition. During the session in 1928, in September, he grilled the then Excise Minister Muthayya Mudaliar with questions and sup-

plementaries to urge a definite policy on Prohibition and a deadline date to bring it into force.

One of the most important subjects on which Satyamurti took special interest was the Annamalai University Bill. When the Bill to establish an University in Chidambaram, named after the munificent donor and founder Raja Annamalai Chettiyar, was introduced and a motion to refer it to a Select Committee was moved, Satyamurti made a forceful speech supporting the Bill. He was behind the idea of establishing the Annamalai University and naturally his enthusiastic support was given to the Bill.

He said "For five years I have been a member of this House and I have never had an earlier opportunity — and I do not know if I will have a later opportunity — when I whole-heartedly agree with a measure brought forward by the Minister for Education. As one having the honour to represent the registered graduates of the Madras University, it gives me great pleasure to say to the new Annamalai University, which I hope will come into existence before the end of the calendar year:

'Go forth my daughter,

Do well ; put to shame thy mother

And improve on her conquests

In the field of knowledge and research.'

Then he paid a glowing tribute to the "illustrious founder of the University." He felt strongly that the creation of a real teaching and residential university was a necessity which would reproduce, according to modern conditions, the ancient *gurukula* camp almost throughout the country and also the atmosphere of Oxford and Cambridge which was a necessity. Supporting the idea of the Minister that the promotion of Sanskrit and Tamil studies should be one of the main aims of the University, he held the view that good literature, whether Tamil, Sanskrit or English, alike proclaim the equality of man.

The Annamalai University Bill was finally passed in October 1928, and Satyamurti seconding the motion moved by the Minister, hoped that the Annamalai University would produce not only graduates but leaders and intellectuals in the model of

Oxford and Cambridge. His hopes were not in vain, as later history has proved. Many eminent leaders and scholars are proud to claim today as being products of the Annamalai University.

The other major contribution by Satyamurti during the life of this Legislative Council was during the Budget debate in 1928. During the discussion on the Police Demand, Satyamurti had some caustic remarks to make against Sir Norman Marjoribanks who had made some derogatory remarks against respected leaders like S. Srinivasa Iyengar, K. Nageswara Rao Pantulu and others who had intimated to the authorities concerned of their intention to lead a procession from Napier Park to the High Court Beach, to demonstrate against the Simon Commission which was arriving in Madras that day (February 18, 1928). The Home Member (Sir Norman Marjoribanks) said that "a pretence was made to advance towards the harbour." Earlier in his speech Sir Marjoribanks made certain statements about Satyamurti's conduct during a protest public meeting held on February 3 to protest against the Simon Commission. He said that Satyamurti had to run through the Government House when the meeting was terminated.

Satyamurti cut in and said, "It is a terminological inexactitude... It is a lie." Referring to Sir Norman Marjoribanks' statement that S. Srinivasa Iyengar and K. Nageswara Rao Pantulu had given an undertaking to the police, Satyamurti lashed out : "These men, if they had cared, could have got over his head as Viceroy's Executive Council Members or Governors of Provinces ; they were men of greater educational attainments, men of greater abilities and greater self-sacrifice than he who is unfit to unloose the shoe strings on their legs." Later on a point of order raised by another member, the President suggested that the last expression should be withdrawn. Satyamurti bowed to the Chair and withdrew the expression used by him against Marjoribanks. Satyamurti was ever amenable to discipline and ready to bow to the ruling given by the President. This was one of the great qualities of the man — ever ready to acknowledge a fault.

During the discussion on the Budget Demand on General Administration, he reverted to his jibes at the Chief Minister :

"My first charge against the ministry is that it is not a political party. The Chief Minister is a party by himself. He didn't go to the elections as a member of any political party. He won because he is a zamindar and his constituency of 39 and odd members returned him as he is a fine fellow."

He had a dig at the other two Ministers. Of Muthayya Mudaliar, he said, "My hon. friend the Excise Minister is reported to have dropped hot potatoes. But there is not one political party in the Province to which he has not belonged. I do not know what party he represents now."

Of Sethuratnam Iyer, the other Minister, he said: "He does not know what he does... One fine morning he was offered a Minister's office. He could not recover from the surprise of his life. And I do not think he has yet recovered from the surprise."

It was in this session that the Public Services Commission Bill reached the final stage. Satyamurti paid compliments to the Revenue Member and the European Group who, he said, "for the first time in the history of the Council have shown they were really an independent body."

Referring to the communal question, Satyamurti clarified his idea of communal justice: "No single community should be allowed to preponderate in the services of the Province, subject always to the minimum standards of efficiency... when once a man becomes a servant of the Government, his future must depend on his character, ability, knowledge and not the ante-natal accident of his caste or religion."

The Third Legislative Council completed its life with the fourth session which ended on April 1, 1930 when the Council was prorogued by the Governor Sir Frederick Stanley.

VIII

Gathering Clouds

BEFORE PASSING ON to the next phase, which was a momentous period of classic non-violent struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, it would be worthwhile to recapture the events leading to the great movement started by Gandhiji.

The annual Congress session was held in December 1928 in Calcutta. It was one of the most eventful sessions in more respects than one. Internal conflicts and controversies marked the proceedings; the no-changers' and pro-changers' attitudes now took a different shape, and it may be said that they divided into two camps: one, of the elder politicians, who were dubbed conservatives and the other, of younger elements represented by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose who assumed the role of revolutionary progressives. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, though he belonged to the older generation, threw in his lot with the younger elements. The real controversy was about the Nehru Report (Pandit Motilal Nehru's report on the constitutional reforms) which favoured Dominion Status if it was conceded within a specified period. The younger element wanted that India should declare independence immediately. Mahatma Gandhi, who had emerged again from his political retirement, took active part in the Congress deliberations. Gandhiji had a comprehensive resolution passed by the Subjects Committee of the Congress. The resolution welcomed the Nehru Report as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and, while adhering to the Madras Congress resolution of complete independence, adopted the Constitution drawn up by the All Parties Committee and considered it as a great step towards politi-

cal advance. A proviso was added saying the Congress would not be bound by the Constitution if it was not accepted by December 31, 1930.

The Calcutta Congress may be described as a turning point in the history of the struggle for Independence. It was a pointer to coming events. It also marked the growth of the more extreme opinion, which was more or less revolutionary, and the emergence of the younger leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and others. Though Mahatma Gandhi was still the undisputed leader, he had to compromise with the younger leadership, especially Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in whom Gandhiji had immense confidence. Gandhiji had become virtually the President-maker of the Congress and for the next session of the Congress, which was to be held in Lahore, he strongly supported Jawaharlal Nehru for Presidentship. He called Jawaharlal his political heir and he described him as the purest gem among men.

The omnibus resolution passed by the Calcutta Congress reflected the compromise between the various elements, each trying to push forward its own programme. Thus, the resolution was a conglomeration of policies and programmes of various shades. The legislative programme was accepted as a regular Congress programme and embodied in the resolution. Prohibition, Khaddar and Gandhiji's constructive programme were part and parcel of the Congress programme. A vigorous drive was to be launched to enlist new members for the Congress in large numbers. A well-trained and disciplined volunteer corps was to be organised.

Srinivasa Iyengar allied himself with the Jawaharlal-Subhas Bose group. He was more inclined towards Subhas Bose. Satyamurti was, naturally, with Srinivasa Iyengar in the group alignment.

The dawn of the year 1929 saw the triple programme of boycott of foreign cloth, prohibition and removal of untouchability becoming a big drive. The committees for these programmes were under the chairmanship, respectively, of Jairamdas Daulatram, C. Rajagopalachari and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj (a millionaire businessman who became an ardent devotee of Gandhiji).

The Government launched on a severely repressive policy throughout the land arresting Congressmen on some pretext or other and sending them to jail after conviction. Several prohibitory and ban orders were promulgated and this provoked disobedience and breaking of those orders by Congressmen.

The opinion, especially in the Congress, was veering round against the work in the Councils. There was growing opinion among Congress leaders that there was no use wasting time in Councils and that more direct action was called for. There was strong opinion within the Congress that Congressmen should resign from the Councils. Even Pandit Motilal Nehru began to see the futility of Councils. Satyamurti was, as usual, staunchly for continuing the fight from within the legislatures.

In this atmosphere of tense feeling, wiser counsels in the Congress urged Gandhiji to take up the Presidentship of the Congress. He flatly refused to do so. He felt the time had come for younger people to shoulder the responsibility. Gandhiji proposed and strongly supported Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for the Presidentship of the Lahore Congress. Actually the Provincial Congress Committees voted, by a large majority, for Gandhiji. But Gandhiji firmly declined to accept the Presidentship and he plumped for Jawaharlal. Jawaharlal got elected as President ultimately.

Meantime the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, who was a good-intentioned man, set about to bring peace. He went to England to confabulate with the higher-ups. On his return, he made a statement in which he declared that the British Government intended to convene a Conference at which that Government would meet representatives of India to discuss the final proposals to be submitted to the Parliament to chart out the constitutional progress. Lord Irwin also declared that the objective of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status. Immediately the Moderate leaders, Pandit Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. Besant met at Delhi. They appreciated the sincerity underlying the Viceroy's declaration and offered to tender their co-operation, if the Government showed a spirit of conciliation and released all political prisoners as an initial token of their sincerity. Gandhiji,

who was being flooded with requests from within the country and from England, to reciprocate the generous attitude of the Labour Government in England, declared he was "dying for co-operation". He issued a statement saying his co-operation — and naturally that of the Congress — would be readily forthcoming on certain conditions being fulfilled. Though the formal conferment of the status of a Dominion might take long, he wanted "real Dominion Status in action."

The Viceroy invited the leaders including Gandhiji to meet him. Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru were scheduled to meet the Viceroy at Delhi on December 23, 1929. On that day there was a bomb incident. Lord Irwin was returning to Delhi from a tour. A bomb exploded when the Viceroy's train was nearing Delhi. Luckily, he narrowly escaped. The meeting with Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru went off as scheduled. Lord Irwin, in spite of the morning's bomb shock, was calm and collected and even hearty.

During the discussion with the Viceroy, Gandhiji wanted an assurance that the ensuing Round Table Conference, proposed to be held in London, should proceed on the basis of granting Dominion Status to India. Lord Irwin could not give any such undertaking beyond the original statement made by him on his return from England. Thus Gandhiji and Pandit Motilal Nehru returned disappointed and frustrated.

The Congress, which met at Lahore in December 1929 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, had to face a hard and tricky situation. It was one of the most momentous sessions. The time limit, set at Calcutta, for the British Government to concede Dominion Status had drawn to a close. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his Presidential Address, touched upon all aspects of the situation. He categorically proclaimed that the goal of India was Independence and nothing less. The main resolution of the Congress was therefore framed on these lines. It called upon Congressmen to devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence. The Congress resolution called upon Congressmen and others to abstain from participating in future

elections and directed the Congressmen then in the Councils to resign their membership of those bodies. In pursuance of the declaration of complete independence at the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1929, the Congress flag was unfurled amidst applause. The Lahore Congress resolution also authorised the All India Congress Committee to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.

Immediately after the plenary session of the Congress, Srinivasa Iyengar allied himself with Subhas Chandra Bose and formed the Congress Democratic Party, which reflected the extremist left-wing trends in the Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose and many of the younger leaders, as well as some of the elder leaders like Srinivasa Iyengar had never "disguised" their disapproval of Gandhiji's basic principle of truth and non-violence as the creed of the Congress, which was not modified into "peaceful and legitimate means" as they wanted. In the Lahore Congress, however, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as the undisputed leader with Gandhiji as his mentor; in spite of his differences with Gandhiji on many vital issues, Jawaharlal abided by Gandhiji's restraining influence.

The newly-formed Congress Democratic Party of Srinivasa Iyengar and Subhas Bose, while endorsing the Congress directive to Congressmen to resign from the Councils, wanted to contest in the new elections and re-enter Councils.

The differences and dissensions in the Congress were not so much on the policies and programmes but reflected conflict of personalities.

The new Congress Working Committee, which met on January 2, 1930 called upon the registered voters to compel the resignation of the members of the Legislative Assemblies and Councils in pursuance of the Congress resolution. It also urged the voters to refrain from participating in the new elections. Twenty-one members of the Central Assembly resigned in response to the Congress call. When the Swarajist-Congress opposition Party disappeared, the Nationalist Party of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya became the main opposition in the Central Assembly.

Satyamurti who was not quite happy about giving up the Council front submitted himself to the Congress mandate. He remained loyal to the Congress. For five years the Trumpet Voice was silenced and the Council Chamber ceased to reverberate with the stentorian voice.

The country was passing through another phase of the biggest non-violent struggle.

IX

Pinch of Salt

JANUARY 26, 1930 was celebrated as Independence Day throughout India with great eclat, in response to the Congress call. 'The spontaneous enthusiasm with which the Day was observed showed the feelings of the people who were ready to fight and sacrifice. Lord Irwin addressed the Central Assembly on January 25 and though he attempted to explain his previous statement made on October 31, 1929, it left the Assembly cold and caused wide disappointment, as it did not improve the position. The statement did not meet the Congress demand for an unequivocal declaration of immediate grant of Dominion Status. Lord Irwin had clarified his position, giving an assurance "to do everything possible for conciliation between the Indian political elements and the Government of India" for "finding a solution of the present difficulties."

Following the Viceroy's statement which caused wide disappointment the Congress leaders primed for a fight. Mahatma Gandhi, the incorrigible optimist that he was, had his own method in dealing with the situation. He was in no hurry to start a fight immediately until he had exhausted all avenues for an amicable understanding. Like the true satyagrahi that he was, he wanted to give every opportunity to the opponent to resile and reconcile. As was his wont, he made an open handed appeal to Lord Irwin and listed 11 points for his acceptance. It was a comprehensive list covering, among others, prohibition, reduction of the pound and rupee ratio to 1 s 4 d. to a rupee, reduction of land revenue, abolition of salt tax, reduction of military expenditure, reduction of high grade salaries, protective tariff on foreign cloth, release of political

prisoners, abolition of CID and licensing of arms for self-protection.

Meantime, a foretaste of the Government's attitude became evident in the repressive policy which the Government had already started. On the Congress side, 172 members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures had resigned in obedience to the Congress mandate. From the Central Assembly, 21 members resigned; from the Council of State 9; among the Provincial Councils, Bengal headed the list with 34 resignations, Bihar and Orissa 31, Central Province 20, Madras 20, U.P. 16, Assam 12, Bombay 6, Punjab 2 and Burma 1.

The Congress Working Committee met at Sabarmati in the middle of February and by a resolution authorised Mahatma Gandhi to start a Civil Disobedience movement, as and when he desired.

In the absence of any response from the Government for an amicable settlement, Gandhiji decided to start the Civil Disobedience movement with his faithful hand-picked followers who had faith in non-violence. The Salt Tax was made the issue. Gandhiji planned to start the Civil Disobedience movement by breaking the Salt Law. He drew up elaborate instructions of what was to be done. He himself decided to lead a band of dedicated followers for breaking the Salt Law by picking salt from the salt pans, which in itself was an offence.

Gandhiji's technique was bafflingly simple. He wanted to launch a big movement for the attainment of independence literally with a pinch of salt. Many wise men nodded their heads in amusement and laughed at the ludicrousness of it. But as Satyamurti often put it: "He laughs best who laughs last."

In his usual manner, Gandhiji addressed, on March 2, a letter to the Viceroy. He started the letter by saying, "Before embarking on Civil Disobedience, and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out." He put before the Viceroy the salient points (already outlined) and stated the "inequities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably

the most extensive in the world." He declared his firm conviction and faith "that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government... The non-violence will be expressed through Civil Disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha Ashram, but ultimately to draw in all those who choose to join the movement, with its obvious limitations." He concluded by saying that if the Viceroy thought there was any substance in his letter, and if he would care to discuss matters with him and like him to postpone the publication of the letter, he would gladly comply, on receipt of a telegram from the Viceroy. Gandhiji sent the letter through a special messenger, Reginald Reynolds, a young Englishman who had been in the Ashram for some time.

The Viceroy's reply was curt and negative; he expressed his regret that Gandhiji should be contemplating a course of action which was "clearly bound to involve violation of law and danger to the public peace."

That put the seal on the last hope of a compromise. The die was cast. History was being made in a novel and unique way. The whole country was agog with expectation.

The greatest non-violent struggle was started by the greatest living soul. The world which had been stirred by this novel crusade by a frail saint turned its wondering eyes on a hitherto unheard of and unknown experiment in human history.

"On bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone instead" Gandhiji wrote, in genuine sorrow. He now prepared to launch a Satyagraha against the salt laws. His plan was to march from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, a seashore village where there were extensive salt pans and to pick salt there, in contravention of the law. He had 78 followers, all picked and chosen from the Sabarmati Ashram; they were all avowed adherents of non-violence. In the early hours of the morning before sunrise, on March 12, 1930, Gandhiji with a staff in hand, began his historic march to Dandi, followed by his faithful band. It was an epic scene and he was given a tremendous

send-off by thousands of enthusiastic people who had gathered. One journalist compared him to Francis of Assisi.

While addressing the people and Ashram inmates before leaving Sabarmati, Gandhiji vowed that he would never return to the Ashram without fulfilment of his mission and until Swaraj was born. He never returned to it; he later set up the Ashram in Sevagram, near Wardha, and lived there the rest of his life.

After covering by foot the 241 miles from Sabarmati to Dandi, in 24 days, Gandhiji and his followers reached Dandi on April 5, 1930. The next day at break of dawn after the usual prayers, amidst scenes of wild enthusiasm, among the thousands who had gathered there to witness the great event, Gandhiji and his followers ceremonially picked salt in the seashore and thus broke the law. Then, in a press statement, he gave the green signal to the whole country, by asking "anyone who would take the risk of prosecution, under the Salt Law, to manufacture salt whenever he wishes and wherever it is convenient." This was a signal for thousands who had been eagerly and impatiently waiting for the word "go". Through the length and breadth of the country satyagraha camps were set up and thousands of volunteers picked or manufactured salt and courted arrest and imprisonment. Huge public meetings were held in the big cities as well as in small towns and villages.

Again, there was an upsurge of people's feelings and enthusiasm, as in the days of the non-co-operation movement; only this time it was on a much larger scale. Mass arrests and convictions took place; lathi charges to disperse satyagrahi volunteers became the order of the day. Firing and shooting were resorted to. Hell was let loose on the people. Yet the satyagrahis and the common people honoured Gandhiji's word and kept strictly non-violent in the face of violent provocations.

Gandhiji now proposed to pursue his campaign of satyagraha by "raiding" salt depots. He again wrote to the Viceroy declaring his intention to raid the salt depots at Dharsana in Surat district.

At ten minutes past 1 a.m. on May 5, exactly a month after

his breaking the salt laws at Dandi, Gandhiji was arrested and taken to Yeravada prison. Before Gandhiji began his Dandi March, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had been arrested. Now, Abbas Tyabji took up Gandhiji's place in the Salt Satyagraha and was arrested.

Throughout the country "councils of action" were set up. "Dictators" came up to the front and were clapped in jail, but the movement went on unabated. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi", Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and several other leaders were arrested, tried and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

In Madras City, Andhra Kesari T. Prakasam, was arrested on April 23 and sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment.

In Tamil Nadu, simultaneous with Gandhiji's Dandi March, Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari) led a batch of 80 picked volunteers and marched from Tiruchchirappalli to Vedaranyam, a seaside village in the east-coast, which was one of the leading salt-producing areas. A camp was set up at Vedaranyam. Rajaji and others were arrested and put in prison and among them was Srimathi Rukmini Lakshmipathi, a brave Andhra lady who led the women of Tamil Nadu.

The whole country was ablaze with emotion and a new fervour. In Tamil Nadu, village munsifs resigned; police constables shed their uniforms and left service. A police constable, a graduate, threw up his job to join the movement.

Foreigners and missionaries, both in India and abroad, expressed sympathy with the people and condemned the repression. An English missionary who was in Madras at that time and who was watching the picketing was belaboured by the police and arrested for the sin of donning khadi. An American missionary who was engaged in khaddar and rural uplift work in Tamil Nadu was ordered out of the country. In Bombay, a British lady, who was doing social work, resigned from the provincial Legislative Council. Rev. John Haynes Holmes, the American evangelist, raised a Gandhi fund for relief of the families of political sufferers. Fenner Brockway, a British

Labour Member of Parliament, condemned the repressive measures taken by the Government to suppress the patriotic mass upsurge. Rev. Belden of the Central Mission Church described Gandhiji as the greatest living Christian. George Slocombe, the well-known journalist and special representative of "Daily Herald", London, who came to India to study the movement, wrote vivid and sympathetic accounts of what he saw in Gujarat in the wake of the Dandi March.

The world's sympathy was with the Congress and the people and Gandhiji's name evoked admiration and respect all over the world.

The Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience movements were going on unabatedly. Satyamurti had at first kept aloof and did not join the movements. From the beginning he had no glamour for jail-going just for prestige, or just for the sake of it. Leaders in Madras like Prakasam and Rajagopalachari were in jail, and for a moment it looked as if there would be a vacuum. Satyamurti was the lone leader still out and free. He could not remain quiet. He became the President of the "Council of Action". Throughout the Madras Presidency and in Madras city, prohibitory orders were in force and meetings, flag hoistings and other activities were banned. Satyamurti, who could no longer keep out, decided to act. He announced his intention to hoist the national flag in front of the Triplicane temple, very near his house, on December 28, 1930. This spot was one which had been, perhaps by inadvertence, left out from the list of prohibited areas by the police. The police were however quick to act and on the morning of December 28, half an hour before the scheduled programme, a prohibitory order was served on Satyamurti. Notwithstanding this, Satyamurti led a band of volunteers, including women, to the spot near the temple. Before he could perform the flag hoisting the Deputy Commissioner of Police who had arrived with a lathi-armed police force, declared the people assembled an unlawful assembly and asked them to disperse. The crowd was lathi-charged. But Satyamurti and his band of followers stood firm. Satyamurti pleaded that it

was not an unlawful assembly as they had gathered only for a very peaceful function, viz. flag salutation and he assured the police official, there would be no breach of peace. When the Deputy Commissioner of Police asked Satyamurti if he was defying the order, he replied that he intended to disobey it. He was arrested and produced before the Second Presidency Magistrate who posted the case to January 8, 1931. Satyamurti was released on his own undertaking to appear before the Magistrate on January 8. (His undertaking was later made a point of detraction against Satyamurti by the Magistrate at the trial).

At the trial before the Magistrate on January 8, Satyamurti made a short statement. "I consider it the duty and privilege of every patriotic and self-respecting Indian to honour the national flag", he said. "I therefore felt it my duty to disobey the Police Commissioner's order."

The Second Presidency Magistrate, who tried him and convicted him made certain irrelevant and uncalled-for remarks. In his judgement, casting aspersions on the sincerity of Satyamurti, the Magistrate said that Satyamurti wanted to circumvent the law by arranging for a flag hoisting in a place which was not prohibited, and when the prohibitory order was actually served on him half an hour before the proposed function, Satyamurti found it too late to retrace his steps for fear of displeasing his friends. Satyamurti was naturally stung to the quick, and, in a statement to the press later, he protested against the Magistrate's unjustified and irrelevant remarks. He took strong exception on the Magistrate's part to analyse his mind and say that he was obliged unwillingly to stick to the announced programme as otherwise he would displease his friends and admirers.

The Magistrate, while convicting him, assumed an air of benign magnanimity and fined him Rs. 10. Satyamurti refused to pay the fine. Later a few pieces of furniture — a table, two chairs and an easy chair, were seized by the police from his residence and auctioned. The ink had not dried on the Magistrate's judgement paper when Satyamurti announced his intention of picketing a foreign cloth shop in George Town,

Madras. On January 9, 1931 he proceeded with a band of volunteers to Bunder Street, where there were a number of cloth shops dealing in foreign goods. He started picketing with the volunteers in front of these shops. The police while first trying to disperse the crowd by lathi charges did not arrest Satyamurti or the other picketeers. Satyamurti, after a brief respite in the afternoon, returned to the spot and started picketing again, along with the other volunteers. He was arrested along with two others and produced before the same Presidency Magistrate again. He made a statement before the Magistrate that while he did not want to take part in the proceedings in the Court, he wished to point out that there was no unlawful assembly of which he was alleged to be a member and there was no intention to commit any offence. This time the Magistrate, who perhaps had become wiser, sentenced him to six months' imprisonment and placed him in "A" class. He was taken to Vellore Central Jail later. Satyamurti's initial chill of jail life wore off and he, like others, became a seasoned jail goer.

The Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience movements became a mass movement and everywhere, young and old, men and women, carried on the non-violent fight by disobeying ban orders, picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, taking out processions, hoisting the national flag — in defiance of law. The repression by the Government became more intense and severe lathi charges, firings and other types of police violence were freely resorted to. By and large, the people remained non-violent. Ninety thousand men and women, young and old, courted imprisonment and filled the jails all over India within 10 months. In 1921, in the first non-co-operation movement, 30,000 men and women satyagrahis were put in jail. For the first time in the long struggle for freedom, women came out in large numbers, braved the lathis and bayonets and courted imprisonment. In Madras, women picketeers were doused with dirty coloured water through the fire service hoses by the police. Many men and women were severely beaten and injured. The whole country was ablaze with resentment and people's feelings were roused to a pitch as never before.

In this tense atmosphere some of the moderate leaders, who were no less indignant at the official atrocities, and some foreign well-wishers tried to bring peace by acting as mediators. Sapru and Jayakar were as usual active trying to put sense into the mighty British power.

The First Round Table Conference had begun on November 12, 1930 in stately splendour in London and 86 Indian delegates — 16 from the Native States and 57 from British India — attended it. The Maharajahs were assembled in force in the Conference. At the plenary Session held on January 19, 1931 the British Premier, Ramsay MacDonald announced the British policy and intentions regarding the future Constitution of India. Conceding that the responsibility of the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial (i.e. the Government would be responsible to the Legislatures with elected representatives) the Premier declared the British Government would reserve certain powers and safeguards “so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own government.”

The Congress Working Committee which was a shadow committee, as the original one was declared unlawful, met at Allahabad on January 21, 1931. It refused to give any recognition to the proceedings of the “so-called R.T.C.” The Committee held that the British Government stood self-condemned by making a show of consulting representatives of India, while as a matter of fact, it had been smothering her true voice by the incarceration of the real leaders of the nation like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Committee expressed the opinion that the British Premier’s declaration was too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress. The Governor-General issued a statement on January 25, 1931 announcing the withdrawal of the notification declaring the Working Committee an unlawful body and the Government’s decision to release Mahatma Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee. They were at full liberty to discuss among

themselves. The Governor-General further declared that the release of the leaders would be unconditional. This action, he said, was taken in pursuance of a sincere desire to create such peaceful conditions as would enable the Government to implement the undertaking given by the British Prime Minister.

Gandhiji was released on January 26, 1931. The other members of the Congress Working Committee were also released. Immediately on his release, Mahatma Gandhi made a statement that he came out of jail with an absolutely open and unbiased mind. Gandhiji was prepared to study the whole situation and discuss with Sapru and others on their return from England. Meantime arrests were still being made and there was no abatement of the repressive policy. Gandhiji, as was his wont on such occasions, wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, bringing to his notice police excesses, particularly the assault on women at Borsad, and asking for an enquiry into the police conduct.

On return from England, Sapru and Srinivasa Sastri hastened to Allahabad to meet Gandhiji and the Working Committee. It was impressed on Gandhiji and the Working Committee that the initiative should be taken for the Congress and the Government to meet and negotiate for peace. Gandhiji readily responded and, taking the initiative, wrote to Lord Irwin seeking an interview with him. The interview was readily granted by the Viceroy. Gandhiji left for Delhi immediately on February 16. The Working Committee had passed a resolution giving Gandhiji full authority to negotiate with the Viceroy. Gandhiji met Lord Irwin on February 17. Gandhiji made the following demands at the interview: Enquiry into police excesses, right to picket, general amnesty, repeal of Ordinances, restitution of confiscated property and re-instatement of government officials who had resigned. After a week's lull, which time the Government took to examine Gandhiji's demands, the Viceroy invited Gandhiji for further talks on February 27. Again, after a fortnight of prolonged discussions, travail, expectations and speculations, a settlement was finally arrived at.

The famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on March 5, 1931.

First, it was agreed that steps would be taken for the participation of Congress representatives on further discussions on constitutional reforms. The Civil Disobedience would be called off by the Congress and reciprocal action would be taken by the Government. Peaceful picketing in furtherance of the replacement of non-Indian by Indian goods or against the consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs, subject to limitations, viz. that picketing should not be aggressive nor accompanied by hostile demonstration, obstruction, coercion, intimidation and restraint, was to be allowed. Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement were to be withdrawn. Notifications in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement declaring associations unlawful would be withdrawn. Pending prosecutions in connection with Civil Disobedience were to be withdrawn. There were several other similar clauses in the Pact.

Gandhiji issued a statement to the Press, explaining in detail the circumstances under which the Pact was made and clarified the several implications. He appealed to both the Congress and the Government to observe strictly the spirit of the Pact. Gandhiji also gave what Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya described in the "History of the Congress" as an epoch-making interview to foreign journalists. Well-known veteran journalists and representatives of the foreign press met him on March 6, 1931 and grilled him for over an hour and Gandhiji gave them a patient audience and with equanimity and good humour he answered all their questions.

The annual session of the Congress (which had not met under regular circumstances during the Movement in 1930) met at Karachi at the end of March 1931, with Vallabhbhai Patel as President. The Congress met under the shadow of two sad tragedies. Pandit Motilal Nehru, who had been released on account of his bad health, died on February 6. Three patriotic youths, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were executed for the political murder of Saunders in Lahore on September 28, 1930.

Sardar Patel's Presidential Address was characteristically short and to the point with no verbiage or high flown sentiments.

One of the resolutions passed at the Congress stated that having considered the "provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India" the Congress makes it clear that the goal of complete independence remains unchanged. The Congress appointed and authorised Mahatma Gandhi to head the delegation to represent it at the Round Table Conference.

In pursuance of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Congress leaders and political prisoners who took part in the Civil Disobedience movement were released excepting those charged for violence. Peaceful picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops was permitted everywhere and it went on for some time, without any hitch. The attitude of the Government and bureaucracy also changed for the better under Lord Irwin who was a sincere man.

Satyamurti was released from Vellore Jail on March 12, 1931. The next day, at a public meeting held in Triplicane, Madras, C. Rajagopalachari, who presided, said "two months ago I took them both" (the other one was R. Chinnaswami, who was arrested and convicted along with Satyamurti) "to jail and I am in a position to return them safely to their dear friends and relatives."

Satyamurti in his speech said that he had promised Rajagopalachari that he would see there was not a single foreign cloth shop in Triplicane within three months. He appealed to the people to promote Khaddar and work for Swaraj.

Satyamurti attended the Congress session held at Karachi at the end of March and participated in the proceedings. He supported the ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He spoke on the resolution about Indians in South Africa and his speech was received with acclaim.

But soon a setback came when Lord Irwin had to relinquish his Viceregal post and Lord Willingdon succeeded him on April 17, 1932. Lord Willingdon was a typical British die-hard of the Blimp school,

While the Congress was trying to meticulously observe the conditions of the truce, the Government minions of the steel frame and petty bureaucrats were itching to revert to their traditional flaunting of authority and might. As soon as Lord Irwin's back was turned, they reverted to their old game. Everywhere prosecutions, arrests, bans and lathi charges were resorted to by Government and in many places many of the conditions of the Pact were not carried out. Gandhiji wrote to the Government listing the complaints received by him. The Government, as usual, justified many of the acts of its officers and gave evasive replies and explanations.

Notwithstanding all this, true to his word, Gandhiji left for London to attend the Second Round Table Conference, but not before entering into a fresh agreement with the Government in Simla on August 27, 1931.

The Second Round Table Conference began on September 7, 1931. Gandhiji addressing the Federal Structure Committee put forth the Congress case lucidly, firmly and fearlessly. Gandhiji's task was hard — he had to fight single-handed against odds — with the pro-British reactionary Indian representatives of various shades with different interests, on the one hand and the imperialists of the British Government, on the other. The Nationalist Government under the Premiership of Ramsay MacDonald had replaced the Labour Government. Sir Samuel Hoare, who was a Conservative, was the Secretary of State for India. In this atmosphere, Gandhiji could hardly make any headway, though his great personality was irresistible and he was greatly venerated especially by the common people of England. The Second Round Table Conference ended on December 11, 1931 without any tangible results or settlement.

Gandhiji while proposing a vote of thanks to the Chairman said they had come to the parting of the ways. He returned sadder and wiser for the experience but his indomitable spirit was not shaken.

Saga of Fasts and Imprisonments

GANDHIJI RETURNED TO India on December 28, 1931 immediately after the Round Table Conference. When he landed in Bombay there was a tumultuous welcome awaiting him and there was a mammoth procession. In solemn and grave tones, he addressed a public meeting in Azad Maidan and told the people of the failure of his mission to England. He studied the situation in India. It was a long tale of woe, of broken promises on the part of Government and breaches of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, in short, a severely hostile and aggressive attitude on the part of the Government.

The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, reversed his predecessor's conciliatory policy and seemed bent upon making the Gandhi-Irwin Pact a dead letter. Gandhiji was impelled to write to the Viceroy again. In his letter which he wrote on New Year's Day in 1932, he detailed the acts of omissions and commissions on the part of the Government and the flagrant violation of the Pact by the severe repressive policy of the Government. He told the Viceroy of the Congress Working Committee's resolution to resume civil disobedience. He offered to meet the Viceroy and discuss with him and suspend the resumption of civil disobedience pending the result of such a discussion. Lord Willingdon's response was a strong "No" and a threat and a warning about the consequences of resumption of civil disobedience. Gandhiji's final telegram to the Viceroy was a reiteration of his resolve to resume civil disobedience since the Government was adamant in its attitude. He assured the Viceroy that he and the Congress stood by non-violence. He said, he

and the Congress will hold themselves responsible for all their activities.

So the trumpets blew again and with fanfare the great fight, which was left unfinished on March 4, 1931 was resumed. The forward march of freedom was resumed with greater fervour and enthusiasm. The government was quick in its retaliation. Ordinances blew off in succession banning the Congress and allied organisations, banning meetings and flag-hoistings, making the assembly of more than five persons unlawful, and legalising detention without trial. On January 4, 1932 itself, when these Ordinances were issued, Gandhiji was arrested at 3.30 in the morning at "Mani Bhavan", Bombay, under an old Regulation (25 of 1827). He was whisked off to Yeravada. Then followed a spate of Ordinances and arrests galore were the order of the day. The whole country was a cauldron, boiling with rage and resentment.

Satyamurti, who continued as President of the Madras District Congress Committee, issued a statement on January 4, on the arrest of Gandhiji and Sardar Patel. He appealed to the people not to indulge in excitement or anger and said the nation should conserve all its national feeling and transmute it into energy for action. He appealed to the people to boycott foreign cloth, British goods and British shipping agencies.

C. Rajagopalachari, who came to Madras, persuaded Satyamurti to jump into the fray again with him. Though Satyamurti had some important engagements like the Syndicate meetings of the Annamalai University and was inclined to postpone his joining the Civil Disobedience movement again, he yielded to Rajaji's persuasion. On January 9, 1932, he accompanied Rajaji to picket foreign cloth shops in Bunder Street, Madras. Rajaji and Satyamurti proceeded from Triplicane to George Town and their taxi entered into Bunder Street and stopped near a foreign cloth shop. They began distributing leaflets in Tamil, enjoining people to join the Satyagraha fight. They were both arrested and produced before the Chief Presidency Magistrate. Rajagopalachari was charged under the new

Molestation Ordinance; Satyamurti was charged both under the Molestation Ordinance and under the Criminal Procedure Code.

In a statement in the Court, Satyamurti said he was not molesting anybody by distributing pamphlets. He said he had been appointed "Dictator" in the City but denied having done any act as managing the affairs of an unlawful assembly, as alleged.

Rajagopalachari, in his statement, also refuted the charge of molestation and said if distributing pamphlets amounted to an offence, he was willing to undergo any punishment under the law.

Satyamurti was convicted and sentenced on the first count to one year's rigorous imprisonment and to six months' simple imprisonment on the second count, the sentences to run consecutively (thus making a total period of 18 months). Rajagopalachari was convicted and sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment.

The Congress House, where Satyamurti had organised the All-India Swadeshi and Khadi Exhibition, was occupied by the police and sealed and the Exhibition closed forcibly.

When Gandhiji and other leaders, including Satyamurti, were in jail, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the infamous Communal Award on August 16, 1932. Under this Award, it was proposed to grant the "Depressed Classes" separate electorates, like the Muslims. Even at the Round Table Conference this question of separate communal electorates was discussed and Gandhiji entered his strong protest against this atrocious attempt at dismemberment of the Hindu community. He vowed he would give up his life, if need be, to prevent this catastrophe. The British policy of divide and rule was being pursued. The Muslims, first, and now a fifth of the Hindu community was sought to be separated from the homogenous Indian nation.

Gandhiji, who was detained in Yeravada prison, near Poona, announced his intention to begin a fast unto death from September 20, 1932 if the British Government did not withdraw

the Communal Award. Gandhiji began his "epic fast" on September 20 with the blessings of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and good wishes of the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri. Messages and greetings poured into Yeravada prison from all parts of the world. The whole country was shaken and stupefied; the world stood aghast with awe and concern for this frail saint—the "naked fakir"—who had staked his life to save the depressed minority of so-called untouchables. Indian leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others acted quickly and began to mediate between Gandhiji on the one hand and the leader of the Depressed Classes, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on the other. Dr. Ambedkar was equally anxious to save Gandhiji though he was bitter against the Hindus. M. C. Rajah, another leader of the Depressed Classes, was from the beginning for conciliation. The efforts of the leaders did not go in vain. Government relaxed the prison regulations and gave facilities for the leaders to meet Gandhiji and discuss freely. As a result of the tireless efforts of the negotiating leaders and the conciliatory attitude of Dr. Ambedkar and other leaders of his community, an agreed settlement was arrived at; C. Rajagopalachari, whom Gandhiji had called his brain and conscience-keeper, played a notable part in evolving a formula acceptable to all concerned. It was agreed, with the approval of Gandhiji, that the Hindu minority community of Depressed Classes would give up the claim for separate electorates and agree to joint electorates, with a reservation of seats for them in the legislatures on a fair basis. The agreement, which was known as the Poona Pact, was signed on the sixth day of Gandhiji's fast. In view of this, the British Prime Minister withdrew his proposal of separate electorates. Gandhiji broke his fast on the seventh day—September 26, 1932. Gandhiji's life was saved and the whole nation and the world heaved a sigh of relief.

Gandhiji, for his part, moved to blot out untouchability and, as a first step, he called upon the Hindus to throw open the temples to "Harijans"—the people of God—the new name he gave to untouchables. At his request and insistence, with a

threat of another fast, full and free facilities were given to enable him to carry on his campaign, for the removal of untouchability, from within the jail. These facilities included meeting people in the jail and discussing with them on this subject.

From the beginning of 1932, the Congress could not function peacefully nor could its annual session be held, due to the repressive policy of Government and the Ordinances. But "Never say die" was the slogan of the Congress and it managed to keep itself and the movement alive. When Sardar Patel, the elected President of the year was clapped in jail in January 1932, he nominated a number of leaders to succeed him, one by one; they were Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Ansari, Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Gangadhar Rao Despande, Dr. Kitchlew and C. Rajagopalachari. All these were arrested one by one. But still the Congress continued functioning against odds.

In Tamil Nadu also, after the arrest and incarceration of Satyamurti and other leaders, the Provincial Congress kept on functioning.

Notwithstanding the severe repression, the annual session of the Congress was held at Calcutta in March 1933. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was to have presided, was arrested on his way to Calcutta, along with other leaders. The Reception Committee was arrested wholesale and over a thousand delegates from all over India were also arrested. In spite of all this the Congress session was held and resolutions passed reaffirming the Congress programme and goal of Poorna Swaraj.

Soon after the Calcutta Congress, Gandhiji sprang a surprise by undertaking another "self-purificatory" fast for 21 days from May 8, 1933. Gandhiji called it a "heartly prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the Harijan cause." He appealed to Sanatanist friends, "to pray that, whatever be the result of the fast for me, the golden lid that hides the Truth may be removed."

The Government obviously not wanting to take any risks this time released Gandhiji on the same day "in view of the nature of the object of the fast and the attitude of mind it disclosed."

Gandhiji was released on May 8 evening itself when he started the fast. Though he was released, he considered himself still a prisoner till the end of the period of his conviction. He continued the fast, even after release and bent his energies to a study of the Civil Disobedience movement. He made it clear that civil disobedience could not be withdrawn, so long as the leaders like Sardar Patel, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other civil resisters were in prison. The Government however wanted an unequivocal undertaking that civil disobedience would not be revived, before they could release the political prisoners. After another period of anxious suspense, Gandhiji's fast was successfully concluded, to the great relief of the nation.

A conference of leaders was held by M. S. Aney, Congress President, at Poona to discuss the situation. Gandhiji explained his position and gave his views at the Conference. In the end, the Conference authorised Gandhiji to meet the Viceroy to discuss and arrive at a settlement. Gandhiji sought an interview with the Viceroy but there was no response from the Viceroy and so the peace efforts failed.

Mass Civil Disobedience was suspended and individual civil disobedience authorised and continued.

Gandhiji announced his intention of marching on August 1, 1933 to Ras, a village in Gujarat, made famous by Sardar Vallabhbhai's arrest there in 1930. But this was prevented and, as on previous occasions, Gandhiji was arrested at midnight with 34 other Ashramites who were to follow him. Gandhiji was released three days later and was served with an order to leave Yeravada village and reside in Poona. When he did not obey the order, he was arrested again and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

The campaign of individual civil disobedience was intensified all over the country following Gandhiji's imprisonment. Gandhiji commenced a fast—again in prison on August 15, 1933—as he was not given the facilities afforded to him during his earlier imprisonment. On August 19 when his condition became serious,

he was removed to Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as a prisoner. When a few days later on August 23, there was apprehension of danger to his life, he was released unconditionally. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was also released on August 30 and he hastened to Poona to meet Gandhiji.

Gandhiji now seriously turned to Harijan work, fulfilling his word at Poona to devote his attention to the Harijan cause. He began the famous Harijan tour in November 1933; he travelled all over the country exhorting people to remove the blot of untouchability and throw open the temples to Harijans. He also actively campaigned for collection for the Harijan Fund. The response from people was great, especially in regard to the Fund; women and girls willingly surrendered their gold ornaments to Gandhiji who auctioned them then and there in the public meetings and realised sizeable amounts for the Fund. A sum of Rs 8 lakhs was collected by Gandhiji during his Harijan tour.

Gandhiji again went on a seven-day fast as a penance for a bomb outrage which happened in Poona; it was aimed at him, but luckily, by mistaken identity of the cars, the bomb burst on another vehicle. Several men were injured, some seriously. The year 1933 thus passed off, leaving a trail of unprecedented repression on the part of the Government and undiminished patriotic fervour on the part of the people. Wave after wave of people went to prison. The year was also distinguished by the series of fasts Gandhiji undertook. The net result, at the end of the year, was Gandhiji's Harijan campaign which roused the nation's conscience to an age-long injustice to a minority.

Satyamurti was in Vellore jail for nearly nine months and his health was affected. The prison doctor who examined him found he was suffering from diabetes. Acting on the medical report, Government released him, unconditionally remitting the unexpired portion of the sentence, and he decided to stay in hospital for a week. On his release, Satyamurti told the press that he had decided to take complete rest for two months under

medical advice. He made the following statement :

"I am glad I am coming out at a moment when the country is in a chastened mood as a result of Mahatma Gandhi's fast.... I am clear in my mind that to pursue the Federation idea now in the present temper of the Princes is to pursue the will o' wisp. It is much better to have provincial legislatures with full responsibility based on the Lothian franchise. If that is agreed to, the legislatures may elect representatives to a Constituent Assembly which will settle the future constitution of the country."

After taking rest for some time in Nandi Hills near Bangalore, Satyamurti returned to Madras and entered hospital; he was operated upon for appendicitis. After his recovery when he was discharged from the hospital, Satyamurti gave a dinner party in honour of Lt. Col. K. G. Pandalai, who had performed the operation and Dr. Guruswami Mudaliar who had been his physician in the hospital. In his speech at the dinner, he said that his experiences during his incarceration had made him feel that he had very dear and warmhearted friends among all political parties, among Government servants and among Europeans. "In this delightful Province of Madras", he said, "there was no room for political acerbity."

Satyamurti was active again soon, though for some considerable time he could not resume his normal activities in full.

The Veteran Crusaders

BARELY TWO WEEKS after the year 1934 was rung in, a catastrophe, the magnitude of which was unparalleled, overtook Bihar and shocked the whole country by its ghastly toll. On January 16, Bihar was rudely shaken out of its foundations by an earthquake of severe intensity which devastated and paralysed the province and took a heavy toll of lives. Houses and buildings crumbled down in a heap of rubble and water at a temperature of 110 degrees *F* steamed out from a depth of 1500 feet. The earthquake affected an area of 30,000 square miles and over 10 million people suffered the terrific impact of Nature's fury. Twenty thousand lives were lost. A million houses were damaged or totally destroyed. Thousands of tanks and wells were damaged or destroyed. Rivers became dry. Where once green crops were swaying in the breeze sand buried and destroyed them.

The whole country was shocked and rose to one man, and offered succour to the woe-stricken people of Bihar. Over a crore of rupees was collected for relief. Gandhiji rushed to Bihar and for a month he toured the province, meeting the stricken people and offering them solace. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders also hurried to offer their services to the stricken people. Pandit Nehru set an example by working with the manual workers in removing debris, digging and removing the rubble. The country was plunged in gloom and neither the people of Bihar nor the people of the country recovered from the shock of it for long. Slowly Bihar began to breathe and recovered gradually.

At the same time the country also was slowly recovering from the severe repression and tyrannic rule under Ordinances. There was a growing opinion among Congressmen that, in the situation created in the country as a result of the severe repression of the Government, Congress should carry the fight in the legislatures as well. A Conference of Congress leaders met in Delhi under the presidentship of Dr. Ansari. It was decided at that Conference that the Swarajya Party, which had suspended its activities, should be revived and the party should contest in the ensuing elections to the Legislative Assembly. The Conference also decided that the elections should be fought on the main issues viz. repeal of all repressive laws and ordinances and rejection of the White Paper issued by the British Government on constitutional reforms and, in its stead, a National Demand should be formulated on the lines indicated by Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference. The Conference deputed Dr. Ansari, Shri Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. B. C. Roy to meet Mahatma Gandhi. The deputation met Gandhiji at Poona on April 5, 1934 and explained to him the decisions of the Delhi Conference and sought his blessings. Gandhiji, in a letter addressed to Dr. Ansari said: "I have no hesitation in welcoming the revival of the Swarajya Party and the decision of the meeting to take part in the elections to the Assembly." Then reaffirming his views on the utility of legislatures, he added "they remain on the whole what they were in 1920, but I feel that it is not only the right but the duty of every Congressman who, by some reason or other, does not want to, or cannot take part in civil disobedience, and who has faith in entry into the legislatures, to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme for which he or they believe to be in the interest of the country. Consistent with my view above, I shall be at the disposal of the party at all times and render such assistance as it is in my power to give."

Gandhiji also issued a statement in which he said, after intense introspection and taking into account all circumstances, he had decided to advise all Congressmen to suspend civil disobedience

for Swaraj, as a mass movement. Gandhiji reserved and confined civil disobedience to himself.

Armed with the approval and blessings of Gandhiji, Dr. Ansari came back. A conference was convened at Ranchi on May 2 and 3 to resuscitate and revitalise the Swarajya Party and to seek the approval of the All India Congress Committee. The All India Congress Committee which met at Patna on May 18 and 19 wholeheartedly accepted the issue of re-entry into legislatures and appointed Dr. Ansari and Pandit Malaviya to form a Parliamentary Board for sponsoring and controlling members of the legislature, on behalf of the Congress. The A.I.C.C. further directed that the Board should select only such candidates who would be pledged to carry out in the legislatures the Congress policy. Thus, the legislature programme became a part of the Congress programme directly.

A sigh of relief was heaved by many a Congressman at the suspension of civil disobedience and the acceptance of entry into legislatures, by the Congress directly. The biggest sigh of relief was from Satyamurti who had been fighting all along for the legislature programme as an integral part of the Congress programme of "fighting from within".

After a lapse of three and half years, during which period the country was wrapped up in civil disobedience by the Congress on the one hand and severe repression by the Government on the other, the regular session of the Congress was held at Bombay at the end of October 1934, under the Presidentship of Babu Rajendra Prasad. The Bombay Congress was a momentous and historic one in more ways than one. Sixty thousand people attended the final session and 2000 delegates were present.

Gandhiji, who had decided to retire from the Congress, participated in the deliberations and the resolutions passed were all under his guidance and inspiration. The Congress passed resolutions on the White Paper on Constitutional Reforms, rejecting it and reiterating its policies and programmes. It reaffirmed its faith in non-violence, under the inspiration of Gandhiji. It decided to entrust the various activities under the constructive programme

to autonomous bodies. The All India Village Industries Association was formed for the revival and encouragement of dead or dying village industries. The Congress also decided to elect a new Parliamentary Board in the place of the existing one. The Congress endorsed the suspension of civil disobedience, except in regard to Gandhiji who had reserved the right to pursue individual civil disobedience. Resolutions on khadi, swadeshi and other items of constructive programme were passed. Other resolutions related to reorganisation of the Congress.

Gandhiji had announced his decision to retire from the Congress and a resolution was passed reiterating confidence in his leadership and requesting him to reconsider his decision to retire. But Gandhiji, while reaffirming his highest regard for the Congress, refuted the interested propaganda by adverse parties that he had left the Congress in disgust. On the whole, the Bombay Congress was a triumph for Gandhiji. And from the midnight of October 28, 1934 he ceased to be even a four-anna member of the great organisation with which he was actually associated for 25 years.

Referring to Gandhiji's retirement, Satyamurti, while speaking at an election meeting in Madras, said: "Mahatma Gandhi is retiring from Congress, but like Lord Krishna, the Mahatma would be the charioteer driving the Congress chariot to victory. Gandhiji's retiring is only for preparing for a bigger fight." How true these words were, events proved later.

Immediately after the Bombay Session, the Congress plunged heart and soul into the campaign for the forthcoming election to the Central Legislative Assembly, which was to come off in December 1934. As early as September 1934, Satyamurti, who had decided to contest the Assembly election in Madras City, made his way clear by writing to the Government. He apprehended that his conviction and imprisonment would be used against him by his opponents to get him disqualified and thus prevent his candidature. He represented to the Government that his conviction on political grounds should not operate against his candidature, as it involved no violence nor moral turpitude.

The Government promptly issued an order clarifying the position and gave the ruling that the sentences of imprisonment would not operate against him as a disqualification. Satyamurti, who was the Vice-President of the Provincial Congress Committee and President of the Madras District Congress Committee, and a Secretary of the Congress Parliamentary Board, was nominated by the Congress Parliamentary Board as the Congress candidate for the non-Muhammadan Urban Constituency of the Madras City.

He had a powerful opponent in Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, who sought election under the Justice Party banner. Satyamurti had already opened his campaign in Madras and he did not even attend the Congress Session as he was busy with organising the election campaign in Madras.

In every division, every important locality, every street, every nook and corner of Madras City, Satyamurti's familiar voice thundered forth. There was not a day on which there was no meeting and in which he did not speak. Sometimes he addressed three or four meetings in a day in different localities of the City. During the mornings and daytime he conducted a street-to-street and house-to-house canvassing campaign. He tried to contact personally every single voter; he would climb the steps of every house, knock at the door and ask for the voter by name; when the house holder made his appearance, he would greet him with folded hands and introduce himself: "I am Satyamurti: I am standing for election to the Assembly as a Congress candidate, you must give your vote to me, i.e. the Congress which represents the Nation and you." Often the voter would be polite and assure him of his support. On some occasions the door was banged in his face rudely. Satyamurti never took it as an affront. Some people were rude to him while talking; but Satyamurti with a pleasant smile tried to convince them. It was his charming affability which carried him on the tide of popular enthusiasm.

The Congress election meetings, especially those addressed by Satyamurti — and there was not a single meeting not addressed by him — were attended by large crowds and popular enthusiasm

for Congress began to swell. Satyamurti's speeches were always pointed, sharp, effective and convincing. He did not spare his opponents and tore the opposition parties' policies to pieces.

There was one unique meeting held in a Church chapel in Madras City when both Satyamurti and his rival Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar spoke from the same platform. Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar was a seasoned politician and as an orator he was in no way inferior to Satyamurti. He had a polished but trenchant way of speaking. At this historic meeting both the candidates put forth their views with all the eloquence, oratorical force and cleverness at their command. Satyamurti did not mince matters and his direct hits and sallies against his rival went home.

Satyamurti, whose health was none too good, and who had barely recovered from his serious illness after his release from jail, did not spare himself; he seemed to have acquired inexhaustible energy and enthusiasm; it was his vigorous campaign which gave the Congress and him a thumping majority over his powerful rivals.

The election to the Assembly was held in December 1934. In Madras City, all over Tamilnad and Madras Presidency the Congress came out in flying colours. In Madras, the Justice party was routed and the hero of the phenomenal victory was of course Satyamurti. Satyamurti himself won in the election over his formidable rival, A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, by an overwhelming majority.

C. Vijayaraghavachariar, the grand old man of Salem who was President of the Nagpur Congress in 1920, complimenting Satyamurti on his speeches wrote to him, "I need hardly say that I am reading all your speeches with great interest, but I particularly wish to congratulate you on the felicity of your last speech, alike as to its humour and argument. May God give you long life and health." Coming as it did from a revered leader of the standing of C. Vijayaraghavachariar, the tribute was all the more precious and well-deserving.

During the whole of the year 1934, Satyamurti kept himself busy

with his many-sided public activities. He attended regularly almost all the meetings of the Madras City Municipal Corporation of which he was member and participated actively at the discussions on various matters that came up before the Corporation. He contributed to "The Hindu" a special weekly column under the title "Current Comments" in which he expressed his views on the various political and public questions of the day, including the Congress, local self-government, plight of the ryots, Bihar earthquake relief and several other matters which claimed public attention then. He appealed to the public for liberal donations to the Bihar Earthquake Relief Fund. Satyamurti interviewed His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Peetam who was camping in Madras and discussed with him numerous social and religious matters like untouchability and social legislation. He had great reverence for the Jagadguru but he boldly differed from him on the question of untouchability. He participated in the annual conference of the Music Academy of which he was one of the founders. Satyamurti addressed a landholders' conference and pleaded for relief of landholders by reduction of land revenue assessment. He addressed a ryots' conference making a powerful plea on behalf of the ryots. At a condolence meeting on the death of the Editor of "The Hindu", A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Satyamurti paid a glowing tribute to the veteran describing him as the right hand man of Pandit Motilal Nehru.

Gandhiji halted briefly at Kodambakkam, a suburb of Madras, during his Harijan tour; Satyamurti called on Gandhiji and discussed with him various matters, including the forthcoming elections. Satyamurti addressed meetings of students in various colleges and educational institutions. At one such meeting held at the V.R. College, Nellore, he delivered a lecture on "India at the Crossroads". At this meeting he deprecated legislation permitting entry of Harijans in temples, as he said it was a matter which was eminently one for mutual adjustment. At another public meeting at Madras, Satyamurti declared he was a Sanatanist and he was opposed to social legislation on matters like prevention of child marriage and temple entry by Harijans, as he believed

true religion could be only established under Swaraj; he was not for forcing temple entry through legislation; he also declared he was against the marriage of girls below 12 years but did not approve of a higher minimum for girls (under the Sarada Act it was an offence to get girls under 14 married).

Speaking on the "Indian Federation" in the Law College Tamil Sangam, Satyamurti declared he was all for a strong central government. He exhorted the students of constitutional law to develop informed public opinion.

Satyamurti participated in the Tamilnad Provincial Conference and moved an amendment to the resolution on certain drastic changes in the Constitution of the Congress but it was defeated. He was elected Vice-President of the Provincial Congress Committee while C. Rajagopalachari was elected President.

Paying a glorious tribute to the Mahatma on his 66th birthday, at a public meeting at Madras, Satyamurti said, "Mahatmaji is an *avatar* of *ahimsa* and the greatest peace-maker in the world." He said the Congress would never allow Mahatmaji to retire.

Storming of the Delhi Citadel

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE election, at the end of 1934, the Fifth Assembly under the Montford Reforms of 1919 met in New Delhi in the first session on January 21, 1935. Out of the 140 members, 44 were Congress members and 11 Congress Nationalists. The Congress Party was the largest single party in the Assembly. The Assembly was unique in this respect: there was a galaxy of distinguished men both on the government side and on the opposition. Sir Nripendranath Sircar, the Law Member, was a most brilliant and successful lawyer from Calcutta; he was an able orator with ready wit and humour. Sir Mohammed Zafrullah (later a Judge of The Hague International Court), Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member. Sir Henry Craik, Home Member, and Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, formed the formidable official phalanx. Among the stalwarts in the opposition were Bhulabhai Desai, an able lawyer who was Advocate-General of Bombay, Govind Ballabh Pant from U.P., who was a "bug-bear" to the Treasury Benches, Asaf Ali, the young barrister from Delhi, Babu Bhagwan Das of Benaras, a learned scholar, his illustrious son, Sri Prakasa, a barrister, N. V. Gadgil, N. G. Ranga, Mohanlal Saxena and V. V. Giri. M. A. Jinnah, leader of the Independents, M. S. Aney, leader of Congress Nationalists and H. P. Mody and Cowasji Jehangir among the Liberals added dignity to the Assembly. Satyamurti, though a new-comer, and junior in the all India arena, was outstanding as an able orator.

The Leader of the Congress Party was Bhulabhai Desai and Pandit G. B. Pant, the Deputy Leader. Satyamurti was one of the Secretaries of the Party.

Satyamurti entered the imperial capital as a crusader and stormed the citadel of the Government—the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly, which had till then been a mere puppet show of the British Government, now became a live legislative battle-field where intellectual rapiers clashed with the imperialist bayonet power; eloquence assailed the stone-walls of bureaucracy; sharp wit made deep incisions on the hardened hides of the power moghuls and made them reel under its impact. The sharpest and most effective of them all was Satyamurti's power punches which made deep dents on the adversary's fortress. The government galaxy, hitherto unquestioned rulers, were shaken. On the very first day that Satyamurti was sworn in, the opening day of the first session, he earned an encomium from his old friend and opponent from Madras, Sir Frederick James, who welcomed him with a handsome compliment. He recalled his earlier association with Satyamurti in the Madras Legislative Council, the Municipal Corporation and the University. "I have had the great privilege of crossing swords with him in the Madras Legislature, Corporation of Madras and the Senate of the Madras University and there is one characteristic feature for which Satyamurti is very famous, that is his power of advocacy". Satyamurti also became famous as a "terrific debater".

The very first act of Satyamurti in the Legislature was to give notice of a Bill to repeal and end certain repressive laws.

On the second day (January 22, 1935) he fired his first shot by moving an adjournment motion on a confidential circular issued by the Home Department of the Government of India. The circular related to Gandhiji's activities. Gandhiji who had retired from politics and ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress, now devoted himself to the constructive programme and was confining himself to building up the All India Village Industries Association, which was set up by the Congress at its Bombay session. The Government of India, always suspicious and apprehensive of Gandhiji, saw a red rag in this new activity of his. It suspected it was but another ruse of Gandhiji to penetrate into the villages and carry on the fight against the

British Government under cover of a village industries movement. In a secret circular, issued by the Home Department to all the Provincial Governments, the Government warned them against the activities of the newly-formed All India Village Industries Association, and asked the Provincial Governments to keep away from the new Association and not to give any assistance, direct or indirect, official or individual. The Government circular referred to the "astuteness of Gandhi" and it apprehended this was but another subtle attempt to pave the way for another civil disobedience movement, under the guise of village industries. With characteristic sarcasm, Satyamurti had a dig at the bad draftsmanship and bad English of the circular. He chastised the Government for questioning the bonafides of Gandhiji and suspecting even "this innocent scheme". "If after this we say all this talk about co-operation, about reconciliation and peace and goodwill is tall talk, and is intended to deceive and not to convince, are we wrong?" he asked.

The motion was talked out but it did not fail to have its effect. The members of the Government Benches rubbed their eyes and felt their own pulses.

Having fired the first shot with dexterous and devastating aim, Satyamurti kept the powder dry for four years and his voice continued to ring in the Central Hall of the Assembly. Every day, the Assembly offered him a fresh opportunity to show his prowess and marksmanship which sent the Government Members often reeling.

Satyamurti's second big shot was fired when the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms came up for discussion. On February 4, 1935, Shri Nripendranath Sircar, Leader of the House, moved that the Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament be taken into consideration. Several amendments were moved — most important of them being the one moved by Bhulabhai Desai, Leader of the Congress Party. His amendment was that the Assembly should refrain from expressing any opinion at that juncture accepting or rejecting the Communal Award: the important part

of the amendment was however on the main recommendation of the Joint Committee's report. By the Congress amendment it was recommended that any legislation based on that (Joint Committee's) scheme should not be proceeded with.

Jinnah moved another amendment which accepted the Communal Award conditionally, described the scheme of Provincial Governments as "most unsatisfactory and disappointing" and called the "All India Federation" as fundamentally and totally unacceptable. The Hindu Mahasabha Leader rejected the JSC Report on his own grounds. After several members had expressed their views, when Satyamurti rose in support of his party leader's amendment, the Treasury Benches and Opposition Benches were alerted. He made them sit on the edge of their seats to listen to this "terrific debater". In a powerful speech he summed up the Opposition case. His opening challenge was addressed to the Government: "I should like to ask the Government whether they are going to vote on this motion. If they do, they will be playing a dirty trick in this House...What right have these automatons, who dare not vote against the Secretary of State, to come to this House and load the dice against the opinion of the House by casting their mechanical 26 votes in the balance?" He pointed out that the Congress went to the polls on the definite issue of the rejection of the White Paper and lakhs of people voted for the Congress and practically all those who favoured the acceptance of the White Paper were defeated in the election. He declared that the freedom movement had not failed. "There is no failure in a nation's fight for freedom", he said amidst cheers. Answering the Law Member's warning that if the Federation is dropped, the Bill must be dropped, Satyamurti concluded in his characteristic style, "If the Federation and if the Bill are dropped, they will die, I assure you, unwept, unhonoured and unsung". (This was one of his stock phrases which he often used).

After a detailed analysis of the various aspects and opinions expressed, Satyamurti concluded his half-an-hour speech by quoting poetry : (at which he was an adept)

"Our enemies have fallen, have fallen;
The Seed, the whole Seed (of Swaraj)
They laughed at in the dark
And grown a bulk of span-less girth
That lays on every side a thousand arms.
And rushes to the Sun".

(loud applause.)

In this Assembly the two pillars of the Government. Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member and Sir Henry Craik, the Home Member, were the constant targets of Satyamurti's sallies. On one such occasion, on March 7, 1935 Sir James Grigg, refuting Satyamurti's references to the former's views said, "Perhaps the honourable member would confine himself to giving his own views, when he cannot give mine correctly". Out came Satyamurti's retort: "My honourable friend must use some other language than he chose when he thinks my interpretation of his language is wrong."

Question hour was Satyamurti's favourite pastime period. He excelled himself as a star performer during question hour, so much so the Treasury Benches trembled when the Question Hour came. He was a past-master in heckling and cornering the Government Members with his question missiles. His supplementaries were deadlier than his questions. He succeeded in drawing out from the Government side, many a fact or information through his persistent questions and supplementaries. So much so the Government Members often found themselves in an unenviable position. Sir Henry Craik, the Home Member, once admitted that during the one hour between 11 a.m. and 12 noon, which was fixed as the question time, Government Members were prone to become a little depressed. Satyamurti's instant facetious remark was "my respectful sympathies."

Satyamurti's first masterpiece in the first Budget session of the Assembly was his speech, lasting nearly two hours, on the Finance Bill. It was no mere oratory but a masterly analysis of the budget proposals in the Bill. He compared the Revenue and Expenditure position in other countries like Great Britain

and Germany with India's financial position and showed what a poor specimen India's budget was. His speech was packed with figures and facts and irrefutable arguments. His criticism was pointed and purposeful and not vague and general. He particularly objected to excise duty on matches, sugar and kerosene as these affected the poor people.

Sir James Grigg, introducing the Finance Bill on March 13, 1935, referred to a suggestion of Govind Ballabh Pant and said that he would not accept a plan for economic improvement outlined by Govind Ballabh Pant. He elucidated his own economic ideas and said, "...we must pray for a disposition of the world to return to the doctrine of cheapness and free exchange and abandonment of what Lord Hugh Cecil called 'the accursed doctrine of scarcity'".

With smashing sarcasm, Satyamurti made mincemeat of the Finance Member's arguments: "There is method in the Finance Member's madness. He says he has no plan. But he has a perfect plan in his head.... He talks of free trade. When he was offered this job, did he tell the Secretary of State 'I am a free trader. I cannot go to a country where the Government is committed to a policy of protection?' Why did he come here.... I said he has a plan. I will tell the House what his plan is... 'The ratio shall remain as it is. I will not change it.' Is it not a plan? 'I am a free trader. But Ottawa shall stand. Imperial Preferences shall stand.' Is it or is it not a plan? 'The military expenditure cannot be reduced; it shall not be reduced'. Is it or is it not a plan? I am saying therefore that the honourable Finance Member's plea that he is against economic planning is, with all respect, as insincere as it is hollow."

Satyamurti's final shot was: "His remedies are still more curious. Evidently he believes in prayer. He said, 'Let us sit down here and pray for the rationalisation of the world, so that international trade can flow and India can share in the resulting prosperity'. I have no particular objection to praying but it is adding insult to injury to come to a responsible legislature like this and say at the end of introducing the Finance

Bill 'I suggest to you gentlemen, please pray' ". At this there was some laughter, and Satyamurti quickly turned it to advantage by another characteristic verbal jugglery. Said he: "I suggest to you gentlemen, please pray. It is a matter for laughter but for the fact that it is too tragic for tears."

Satyamurti always reserved the gems for display at the end of his speeches. He climaxed his speech on the Finance Bill with one of those characteristic outbursts of emotion: "If the government will not yield to our demand, then God help Great Britain. God help India, because if our methods do not succeed, I say there is no other alternative before India than red revolution.... It seems to me that when the revolution comes nobody will be able to say what turn it will take. It is therefore for the Government today to grasp the hand of peace and fellowship which we offer, agree to the demand for a Constituent Assembly, to scrap this Government of India Bill and agree to a Constitution under which India can have full self-government and yet remain friendly with Great Britain. That time is today; very soon it may be too late. Time and tide wait for nobody and I should like to warn the Government here and the Government in Great Britain in the words of the great Persian poet:

'The moving finger writes and having writ
Moves on; not all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all the tears wash out a word of it' ".

That was typically Satyamurti: the versatile scholar who could quote as easily from Manu and the Upanishads as from Omar Khayyam or Shakespeare.

In the British Parliament, the Secretary of State referred to the Constitutional Reforms proposals which the British Government was determined to push through despite the unequivocal condemnation of the Congress and other parties; and he (Secretary of State) made the famous — or notorious — remark, "The British Caravan will pass on, even if the dogs bark". Satyamurti, ever alert to such challenges, gave it back in the

Assembly with a punch. "An arrogant Secretary of State said, the other day, 'The British Caravan will pass on, even if the dogs bark'. Sir, I do not want to use any cheap bravado, but we, on this side of the House are determined to see the Caravan of the Indian National Congress pass on to the fullness of its goal, whatever dogs, British or other, bark". This was acclaimed with cries of "hear, hear".

Sir Henry Craik, the Home Member, came in for another sally from Satyamurti, when he spoke against a bill to amend the Criminal Procedure Code. Satyamurti supported the motion and discharged his cannonade at the Home Member: "My honourable friend is still primitive in his judicial conception, in spite of his boast that he was a very good Sessions Judge." Then he added, "...that is why we get honourable Home Members who do not understand the ABC of criminal justice."

On March 26, Satyamurti put a question asking whether the report of CID officers regarding the antecedents of the Nationalist and Congress members of the Assembly could be made available to the House. The Home Member declined to oblige Satyamurti saying that the report was of a confidential nature.

To another question the Home Member said, "We get the best information available." Satyamurti pursued and asked, "What is the information about me?" The Home Member who perhaps wanted to pay Satyamurti back in his own coin, said, "The honourable member perhaps takes himself more seriously than I do. Actually I have not read what is said about him." Out came Satyamurti's retort: "I am very glad to learn that. In that case may I know why this book is printed at the cost of the tax payer when what the honourable member did, is not even to read the book."

Sir Nripendranath Sircar, the Law Member, was equal to Satyamurti in his sarcasm. On one occasion, opposing a motion for consideration of a bill to repeal the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, which a member from Orissa moved, the Law Member, referred to the speech made by Satyamurti in Calcutta four years before, at a students' conference, and gave a sarcastic

description of the scene. He said, "I ask the House to visualise the situation. Here is my honourable friend, garlanded, bugled and drummed, talking to an association of students...."

Satyamurti's instant counter sarcasm was, "I appreciate my honourable friend's jealousy". Sir Sircar would not accept defeat. He retorted, "Indeed and really I am jealous. I cannot imagine that I shall ever attain the height of favour that there would be buglers and drummers in my honour." Not to be defeated either, Satyamurti came out with the pithy rejoinder : "I am sorry".

Another important subject which claimed Satyamurti's full rhetoric was the salt tax. Supporting the motion to reduce the salt tax from Rs. 1.25 to Re 0.75 per maund, Satyamurti went a step further and made a powerful plea for abolition of the salt tax and for making salt available freely to the poor people. "In this country, we were able, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, to lead a very powerful agitation against the salt tax", he said, "because there is a genuine widespread and strongly felt feeling that this tax must go." While advocating the abolition of the salt tax he gave constructive suggestions as to how the loss of revenue could be made up in other ways which would not affect the poor. He gave facts and figures, quoted authorities and showed how this burden of the tax could be removed without loss of revenue, by exploring other avenues of revenue. He effectively answered all the arguments put forth by the Government to justify the tax. He pointed out that the salt tax was not known in many countries of the world and he characterised the tax as a poll tax on the poorest of the people. Satyamurti concluded his speech declaring: "Those of us who claim to represent the poorest are going to make no common cause with the government, but to stand and vote for this principle that salt shall be tax free and will be available as God's gift to man and beast in this country." The motion for restriction of the tax was passed by a majority of the House.

Satyamurti's outstanding contribution was his brilliant speech opposing the Criminal Law Amendment Bill brought forward by the Home Member Sir Henry Craik on September 5, 1935 during

the second session of the Assembly which was held in Simla. The purpose of the Bill was to renew the old Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in 1932, which was about to expire. The grounds on which the Home Member sought to give new life to this obnoxious law were the threat of terrorism, communal unrest, and the communist movement. The Home Member wanted to place this Act permanently on the statute book. Satyamurti, in one of his longest speeches lasting over an hour, opposed the motion and analysed the Bill and laid it bare. He criticised the Government's attitude towards the Press, which he categorised as "friendly" and "unfriendly", using the former for their propaganda and looking askance at the other. He gave the House a piece of advice, quoting from the *Ramayana*, the advice Maricha gave to Ravana. Translating the Sanskrit verse of Valmiki he said: "Men who talk pleasant inanities are plenty, but those who speak the truth, be it pleasant or unpleasant, are very few. And those who listen to the truth are fewer indeed." Adverting to the "cool and audacious assertion" of the Home Member that the enactment would remain permanently on the statute book, Satyamurti called it the "ugliest feature". He assailed the Home Member's argument for permanence of the measure on the plea that temporary legislation against subversive movements encouraged the hope that those movements may be revived. Satyamurti suggested to the Home Member that instead of believing in only one method of dealing with movements, namely suppressing them, he could take from the political philosophy and history of his own country: "... and with saner, better and more effective method of dealing with these movements and that is to remove the causes for these movements." (This was greeted with cries of "hear, hear".)

He answered point by point all the arguments of the Home Member and exposed the hollowness of these arguments. He asked the Law Member to use his legal conscience to tell the House if he (Satyamurti) was not right in his contention that the ordinary law of the land was sufficient to deal with picketing carried on illegally.

Sir N. N. Sircar asked, "Are you charging me with having a conscience?" to which Satyamurti's quick repartee was? "I apologise."

Coming to the *piece de resistance* of the Bill, that is, the provision of "the better control of the Press" he pointed out how the Press was sought to be gagged. He warned the Government that the attempt to antagonise the Press boded no good to anybody.

He concluded his hour-long speech with these words: "It seems to me, Sir, that if in spite of the warning of this House, if in spite of the experience of other countries, if in spite of the experience of their own country, the Government will enact this measure in spite of public opinion, they are ignoring the writing on the wall and they are driving another nail in their own coffin." (He quoted again the verse of Omar Khayyam which he had quoted in an earlier speech.)

K. Shivalingam

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XIII

The Golden Year

THE YEAR 1935 found Satyamurti as active as ever. Besides his preoccupation with the Central Assembly session at Delhi and Simla, Satyamurti kept up his other activities. He never missed the Madras City Corporation's meetings nor the meetings of the Madras and Annamalai University Senates. In all these fields he made valuable contribution by his active participation and oratorical ability. He continued to contribute his personal column "Weekly Comments" to "The Hindu". He participated in the Tanjore District Political Conference. He addressed the Tanjore Mirasdars' Conference and sympathised with their lot; he advised the Mirasdars to join the Congress. He presided over the Rayalaseema Conference held at Chittoor in Andhra. While advocating the rejection of the proposed new reforms he strongly felt that the Congress should contest the elections under the new reforms on two issues, namely, setting up of a Constituent Assembly and capturing power for using the legislatures as instruments in the struggle for Swaraj.

He vigorously worked for swelling the ranks of the Congress by campaigning for enrolment of members.

The Congress Parliamentary Board, which had been set up under the presidentship of Doctor Ansari, elected Bhulabhai Desai as Leader of the Party in the new Assembly and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant as Deputy Leader and Satyamurti as Secretary.

C. Rajagopalachariar, who was President of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee during the year, announced his intention of retiring from politics. Satyamurti and other leaders tried to persuade him against this step, but Rajaji was firm in his re-

solve. He put up Satyamurti as his successor for the Presidentship of the Provincial Congress Committee and got him elected unanimously. It was an eye-opener to Satyamurti who had not seen eye to eye with Rajagopalachariar in many matters. But during the year, the two leaders got into closer contact and began to understand each other better. Satyamurti was so overwhelmed with Rajaji's gesture of making him President of the Provincial Congress Committee, that he changed his previous opinion of Rajaji. Satyamurti, like many others who did not understand Rajaji, thought of him as a cold person. But now Satyamurti who had come closer to Rajaji understood him better and expressed his opinion thus: "I had some mistaken ideas about C. R. The man has a heart of gold." This was immediately after his unanimous election as President of the Tamil Nad Provincial Congress Committee. Satyamurti was now all admiration and warm feeling for Rajaji. He began actively canvassing for Rajaji's election as Congress President, without his knowledge. Satyamurti wrote to Babu Rajendra Prasad, who was President of the Congress and other leaders asking them to support the proposal. Babu Rajendra Prasad in his reply to Satyamurti wrote on September 11, 1935: "Nothing would give me greater satisfaction, than to see Mr. Rajagopalachari adorn the Presidential Chair. In fact when I think of it, I feel like a usurper occupying the place which was by right his. But at present, there are various opinions working and acting in different directions. It is not possible or right for me to express myself in this respect freely. I have not been in touch with him for some time. Will he accept it if the place is offered?" When Rajagopalachari came to know of the proposal, he promptly turned it down and for the second time he missed the honour of adorning the Presidential Chair (he declined in 1925 a similar offer). Never was anyone so disappointed and sorry than Satyamurti. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President that year.

During this period Satyamurti was in constant touch with Rajagopalachariar. Though Rajaji had retired from active politics, he continued to guide and advise Satyamurti in many

matters. Rajaji wrote a letter to Satyamurti: "If Rajen Babu has asked you to attend the Working Committee meeting, you should attend. It is important that our side should be properly and strongly represented. You know Rajen Babu well and can understand my point. I cannot think of any good substitute for you." It is not clear what he referred to when he said "our side should be properly and strongly represented." May be, it was the question of office-acceptance.

In another letter written on September 13, 1935 marked "Private and Confidential" Rajaji gave the details of his discussions with Gandhiji over the delimitation question and the Poona Pact. Rajaji told Satyamurti that Gandhiji and he had gone through all the papers sent by Satyamurti, M. C. Rajah (the Depressed Classes leader) and "other friends" on the question. Rajaji said that Gandhiji had understood the position, the motives behind the proposals and the evil effects that must result therefrom, but he had said he could not make a campaign question of it; as the main principle was there viz. that any voter, Harijan or non-Harijan might, if he chose, cast his vote in either poll. He advised Satyamurti that he and M. C. Rajah, should devise plans for a public agitation against the British Reforms proposals for which the Poona Pact had been all but broken. He further advised that a memorandum should be prepared quickly and signed by important men like Rajah and others and a copy should be sent to Gandhiji who would be able to take some effective steps in his private capacity.

Even at this time, the question of Madras City being in Andhra or Tamil Nad had cropped up and there was a suggestion that the City should be shared by both Andhra and Tamil Nad by having a joint committee of the Congress with representatives of Andhra and Tamil Nad to carry on the Congress work in the City. Shrewd and farseeing Rajaji sensed it was the thin end of the wedge and he immediately warned Satyamurti against being inveigled into accepting the proposal. Satyamurti was evidently being swayed by what appeared to be a good-intentioned proposal (to bring the two linguistic elements together).

But Rajaji saw through it and uttered his warning in a letter to Satyamurti written on November 3, 1935. He wrote, "I am honestly convinced a joint committee will be ruinous and is unworkable. Every issue, every solution, every step, will be a source of bitterness, a scope and opportunity for intrigue and worse. All future work will be open to the target of the Justice Party's intrigue and corruptions. I warn you most earnestly not to be tempted for any reason to accept the joint and double jurisdiction." Rajaji's timely warning and advice did not go in vain. Satyamurti took it and saved a bad situation. (But Rajaji's prophecy proved correct in another context, when 17 years later he took over the reigns of Government as Chief Minister over the undivided Madras State and a situation was created when the Andhra State had to be formed — the first in the chain of bifurcation and dismemberment of the country. But Rajaji saw to it that Madras City was retained in Tamil Nad).

Satyamurti who had been one of those mainly instrumental in converting the Congress in favour of council entry, now took the second step of initiating a campaign for office-acceptance. He had expressed his views on the subject in some meetings and conferences and immediately there were protests and criticisms, in the Congress ranks.

Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, writing to Satyamurti, from Nainital, on June 30, 1935 while congratulating him on his unanimous election as President of the Tamil Nad Provincial Congress Committee, expressed his concern at learning from newspaper reports about Satyamurti's support of acceptance of office by Congressmen. He characterised it as premature and inopportune and felt that no useful purpose would be served by premature controversy. Satyamurti however continued canvassing support for acceptance of office (i.e. capturing power in the provincial legislatures). The 'Hindustan Times' of Delhi in its issue dated May 15, 1935 came out with a blistering attack on Satyamurti for his "ventilating his own views" on office-acceptance as if they were the considered judgement of the Congress itself. To

this Satyamurti gave a suitable and effective reply clarifying his position. He ultimately carried the day as events proved later.

Satyamurti's position as president of the Provincial Congress Committee was no bed of roses. There were opposition and intrigues against him even within the Party. Rajaji tried to smoothen them out by speaking and convincing the leaders who were ranging themselves against Satyamurti. In a letter written on December 4, 1935 Rajaji assured Satyamurti thus: "I shall always be frank with you and shall tell you plainly if I felt you should let any one else take your place. Carry on with a peaceful mind and rely on my loyal co-operation, whatever it may be worth."

Satyamurti was carrying on the Congress campaign vigorously. Earlier, Bhulabhai Desai, in a letter from Ootacamund, dated May 25, paid him a compliment: "I notice that you are carrying on intensive propaganda and thereby consolidating our position with the electorate by explaining our work."

In October, the same year, Babu Rajendra Prasad, as Congress President, toured Tamil Nad. Though Satyamurti could not accompany him in the initial stage of the tour, he joined him a few days later. Satyamurti, with the help of his loyal followers like Kamaraj, was able to organise the Congress President's tour very successfully. This enabled people in almost all the districts of Tamil Nad to see and hear Babu Rajendra Prasad. Writing from Gandhi Ashram, where he had retired, Rajaji complimented Satyamurti and said: "From what I see in the papers I see that Rajen Babu's tour has been most successful. His calm, gentle and powerful speeches are as perfect in technique as effective in substance. I am certain that the tour will leave the province in a greatly strengthened condition for the Congress. How I wish I had been going about with you to see all this enthusiasm and nail down the results.... I wish you could have come and met me some time. But it has not been possible. God alone knows how you are standing with this strain on your poor health."

Rajen Babu's tour was not merely a routine tour of the Congress President. It was meant to revive and re-awaken the

people and revitalise the Congress. Satyamurti's assumption of the Provincial Congress Presidentship roused enthusiasm in the younger elements in the Congress and outside and revived the Congress in the Province as a vigorous active political body. Kamaraj, who had come under the influence of Satyamurti, early in life, now became an able lieutenant and to him goes the credit of making the Congress organisation in the Province a well-knit disciplined body.

The Golden Jubilee of the Congress was being celebrated on a nation-wide scale. In Tamil Nad, Satyamurti, who had a penchant for grand scale celebrations, made this occasion a national festival of rejoicing.

He organised the All India Khadi and Swadeshi Exhibition on a big scale in Madras. Along with it, an Art Festival was organised in which leading musicians and artistes participated. Satyamurti believed in attracting people by such popular media. He knew the value of these exhibitions and festivals was much more than mere public speeches.

The Exhibition and Art Festival attracted huge crowds and people — not only residents of Madras but from all parts of the Province — came to see the Exhibition and attend the Art Festival. This was one of the proudest achievements of Satyamurti.

The year ended with a note of joy and achievement and to Satyamurti it was momentous in more ways than one. It added several feathers to his cap.

Though he had often to tread a tough path, Satyamurti was able to overcome all obstacles. He was heartened and strengthened in no small measure by the moral support and valuable advice of Rajaji and the active help and service rendered by devoted and loyal followers, especially among younger Congressmen, like Kamaraj, who silently took much of the physical burden off the shoulders of Satyamurti.

Satyamurti now emerged as a provincial leader with an all India standing and reputation. The Golden Jubilee year was indeed a golden year for Satyamurti.

Victory—Climax—Anti-Climax

IF THE YEAR 1935 was a “Golden Year”, the succeeding two years were an alloy of Victory, Climax and anti-Climax. Satyamurti’s name and fame reached the pinnacle and the best years of his public and parliamentary life were between 1936 and 1939. He was re-elected President of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee.

The new Constitution under the Government of India Act of 1935 was announced by the British Government and Provincial Autonomy was conceded. Satyamurti started campaigning not only for contesting the elections for the new provincial assemblies but also for capturing power by accepting “office” i.e. forming ministries in the provinces. There was strong opposition in the Congress against acceptance of office and many senior Congress leaders like Govind Ballabh Pant and others considered it premature to declare the intentions of the Congress in the matter of office-acceptance. Even the Nationalist Press criticised Satyamurti for his premature open advocacy for acceptance of office. Undaunted, Satyamurti persisted in propagating his views trying to convince other Congress leaders and though, at the beginning, it seemed as if he was fighting a losing battle, later events proved otherwise.

During 1936, Satyamurti was mainly preoccupied with his work in the Central Assembly and during the year made some remarkable contributions in that Assembly. One of his most outstanding performances was his great marathon speech, when he moved that the Bill to repeal and amend certain repressive laws be referred to a Select Committee. He had given notice of this Bill during the end of 1934; it was almost his first act when he

entered the Central Assembly immediately after his election that year. But the Bill came up only early in 1936 and, as Satyamurti put it, it was a fair index of the progress of non-official bills in the Assembly. It was on February 20, 1936 that he moved the motion for referring the Bill to a Select Committee and he made one of the longest speeches.

The infamous Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code, known as the Sedition Section, came under heavy fire from Satyamurti. Referring to the expression "hatred and disaffection" which figured in the Section, Satyamurti posed a question to the Law Member, Sir N. N. Sircar: "Supposing my honourable friend is in office and I am in the Opposition, how am I going to displace him?" Sir Sircar interposed: "It is the other way. I am in the Opposition, you are in the Ministry (laughter)." Satyamurti rose equal to the occasion: "Very well, I will suppose I am a minister and I deserve to be in the Ministry for all time. How is my honourable friend going to dislodge me except by words, spoken or written, and by signs or visible representation, or otherwise, by bringing me and my government into hatred and contempt or exciting disaffection to me?" Sircar: "I shall say he is quite a charming man but had made mistakes (laughter)." Satyamurti's quick retort was, "Evidently my friend has only fought and lost elections. I have fought and won them. Therefore I will tell my honourable friend that if he goes about saying that I am a charming man, he will not get any votes against me (laughter)." Sircar: "I suspected this was for catching votes."

Quick came Satyamurti's retort which silenced the Law Member: "In democracy we believe in catching votes and not in catching the tails of Governors or Viceroys (laughter)." Thereafter Satyamurti gave it back several times by referring to the Government Members as "charming people who occasionally make mistakes."

He spoke for nearly five hours for which he apologised but justified it as unavoidable, as the Bill itself was long. He had not finished, when the President announced the adjournment of

the Assembly. He resumed his speech on April 9, which was the next non-official day. Satyamurti performed the most remarkable feat of making a marathon speech throughout the day, "filibustering". The Congress benches were empty as most of the Congress members had left for Lucknow to attend the Congress Session and Satyamurti was the lone crusader. The Government would have gladly seized the opportunity and defeated Satyamurti's motion when the Congress benches were depleted. But Satyamurti clearly manoeuvred to keep the matter alive by filibustering (by his marathon speech). He was on his legs throughout the day. He made a thorough analysis of the state of law under such repressive provisions as Section 124 A. His speech was copiously interspersed with citations of case law, cases tried under the section and judgments delivered in the various High Courts. He quoted Lord Morley and from Stephen's "Digest of Criminal Law" and several other authorities in support of his arguments.

Earlier, when he moved the motion on the first day, at one stage, Satyamurti quoted from the judgment of Chief Justice Rankin in a Bengal case. Sir N. N. Sircar asked for the name of the case. Not to be caught napping, Satyamurti instantly gave the case name and the volume and page in the *All India Reporter*. That showed how thorough he was with his case and how he had all the information at his finger tips. The motion of Satyamurti was however shelved when Dr. G. V. Deshmukh, another Congress member, moved for postponement of discussion on the motion. The motion was carried. The secret of the whole matter was that Satyamurti's motion was in danger of being defeated; hence all these manoeuvres.

During this Session of the Assembly, Satyamurti participated in the Railway Budget and spoke on a cut motion. He began his speech with a cutting reference to the Railway Budget as that of "an insolvent concern for whose insolvency I see no hope." Then he gave "tragic financial facts" to show how "the history of the railways since 1923-24 is one continuous rake's progress, financial irresponsibility of the worst kind." He did not merely

indulge in destructive criticism, but made some constructive suggestions, such as discontinuing the free transport of military personnel; free travel for Government officers (who he said should pay from their pockets), withdrawal of all concessions and co-ordinating of all transport authorities. His speech was acclaimed with loud applause.

The Ottawa Trade Agreement was another target for Satyamurti's trenchant criticism. Supporting the motion for appointment of a Committee to examine this discredited Agreement, Satyamurti denounced it. Referring to Sir R. K. Shanmukham Chetti (who was sent by the Government as its representative to Ottawa and who was responsible for the Agreement) Satyamurti made these sarcastic remarks: "...To the extent to which the electorate gave any verdict in the Commerce Constituency of Madras, ...where this valiant Knight of Ottawa was sent to take his rest in Cochin by my honourable and esteemed friend" (Mr. Sami Venkatachalam Chetti defeated Sir Shanmukham Chetti in the election from the Madras Commerce Constituency). (The reference to Cochin was a hit at the appointment of Sir Shanmukham Chetti as Dewan of Cochin, the reward he got for the Ottawa achievement.)

Satyamurti also participated in the Budget Debate. Referring to Dr. Mathai, he said, "My friend deprecated statistics. We know there are white lies, black lies and statistical lies. My friend quoted Omar Khayyam the other day. I shall also quote him:

'Myself indeed eagerly frequent,
Mody and Mathai and had great assignment.
Theories galore, and ever more,
Came out by the same door, and in I went.' "

During the Budget Debate, Satyamurti moved a cut motion under the demand "Executive Council". It was virtually a no-confidence motion. Satyamurti, with his usual penchant for critical analysis, took the opportunity to flay the Government. Condemning the heavy monetary expenditure he said: "So far

as we are concerned this army is not here to protect the skeletons in our villages, who have nothing to live on, whose continual life is a dreary struggle with poverty, disease and ignorance, and the demarcating feature of which are only deaths, from epidemics, gross infantile mortality and the visitation of the exacting revenue officials (hear, hear).” He asked the government to cut down the military expenditure. Then he spoke on Indian shipping, the unemployment which “stalks the land”, Indians overseas, political detenus — in fact he made a sweeping summary of every conceivable subject on which the Government could be put on the racks. The Finance Member, Sir James Grigg, who was his favourite target, did not escape either from his sarcastic tongue. “I rather like the Finance Member,” he said [it was a mutual feeling], “both he and I believe in calling a spade a spade and not a useful agricultural implement that it is” (laughter) “and he spoke Sir, the truth when he said that he seeks to please nobody here: he seeks to please himself.” He was given only 20 minutes to speak, but he was irrepressible and he managed to stretch it to half an hour. He concluded his speech with one of his usual Sanskrit quotations; this time it was an aphorism which in substance said even a benevolent autocrat must try to please his people.

Whenever Satyamurti was free from the Assembly Session, he was busy campaigning and organising in his home province, besides keeping up his other activities. It was amazing how with his shattered health, Satyamurti could cope up with so many public activities. He thrived on them and, perhaps, that gave him the strength and stamina mentally and physically.

He attended the Lucknow Congress after his spectacular marathon performance in the Central Assembly on the repressive laws amendment and repeal bill, which he had moved. He tried to canvass support at this Congress for the office acceptance programme, but he sailed against heavy weather and had to swim against the current, as most of the senior Congressmen were still opposed to the idea.

Babu Rajendra Prasad moved in the Subjects Committee that

the decision on the office-acceptance question be postponed. Satyamurti seconded the resolution. (If a decision had been pressed upon, then it would have gone against office acceptance; so this was just bypassing that danger). Speaking on the motion, Satyamurti described how, if the Congress assumed power, national flags would fly on all public buildings, Mahatma Gandhi's portrait would adorn the walls of all public offices, educational institutions and *Vande Mataram* would be sung in all public functions. This brought down ridicule from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was President of the Congress and the Socialists in the All India Congress Committee. They said the goal of the Congress was the attainment of independence and not hoisting national flags and singing national songs. Acharya Kripalani came to the rescue and with his usual sarcasm asked the Socialists whether it was not for hoisting the national flag that hundreds of people had courted imprisonment in Nagpur (Flag Satyagraha) and did not the people who laughed at Gandhiji for picking salt, to achieve independence, gape in wonder when the Government made peace with Gandhiji. In the same way, he said, Satyamurti's claim was right.

After returning to Madras, Satyamurti started trimming the sails for the election to the Provincial Legislature which was scheduled to be held in 1937. He started the campaign, by first alerting the people and appealing to all those who were qualified to vote to enroll themselves immediately. He took pains to examine the rules and procedure for elections and took immediate steps to get several discrepancies and defects rectified by directly approaching the Provincial Government authority, like the Chief Secretary. As President of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee he became the Chairman of the Provincial Parliamentary Board, which was constituted to select candidates, organise propaganda and publicity and generally direct and handle all matters connected with the election. Tirelessly he toured the whole of Tamil Nad for 10 months, keeping himself in close touch with the workers and the people, discussing with local leaders, supervising organisational matters and, of course, addressing public

meetings everywhere. He roused the people's consciousness to their responsibilities and impressed the Congress image strongly in their minds and kept the Congress flag flying.

The year 1936 saw Satyamurti making some outstanding contributions to the Assembly debates.

On April 6, he supported a resolution moved by another member, recommending the appointment of a Committee to enquire and report on cottage industries. Satyamurti made his and his party's position clear. He said: "I am anxious that this constant pitting of small and cottage industries against large industries and trying to help neither must be put an end to. We, on this side of the House, have a definite idea in our minds when we talk of protection to cottage and small industries. It is not as if we want our big industries like the textiles, iron and steel or the jute mill industry, to be destroyed. We want them to progress to the extent to which it can be done; our cottage industries ought to be allowed to develop as much as they can."

He continued: "The moment you protect the small industries, the producers and consumers tend to come much nearer. You eliminate the middleman, you eliminate the capitalist, you eliminate the proprietor and you will find all classes supporting, very much more willingly, any policy of protecting the small industries than even a policy of protecting large scale industries. We feel that certain large scale industries have come to stay.... I hope that we shall soon have large scale industries manufacturing motor cars in this country, and all our railway requirements too." Alas! he did not live to see his vision come true.

Adverting to the need for developing cottage industries, he said: "What is the biggest problem in India today—the problem of finding bread for the millions of agriculturists who live and must live in our seven lakhs of villages? They now get work for four months a year and for eight months after, they remain idle. You must find some supplementary occupation for them.... All this idea of intensive agriculture will lead nowhere. You must find supplementary occupations and you will find

cottage industries will come handy". He suggested that every cottage should be provided with electric power. Then he wanted an all India survey of cottage industries and wanted a ten-year programme. He also referred to the handloom industry which deserved all encouragement and protection. He wanted exhibitions to bring out the value of cottage industries. He wanted the Viceroy's House and other Government establishments to encourage cottage industries. He paid a tribute to the All India Village Industries Association started by Mahatma Gandhi and wanted Government to encourage it.

Towards the end of the year, in October, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress, undertook a tour of Tamil Nad at the invitation of Satyamurti. Satyamurti issued an appeal to the people of Tamil Nad to give a rousing welcome to the Congress President. He gave detailed instructions to the Congress organisations and the Congress workers in the districts, as to how the tour should be arranged. He chalked out the President's programme with meticulous care, not omitting even a minor detail. In this work, Kamaraj, who had become his faithful disciple and constant companion, was a source of immense strength to him. Kamaraj, who was Secretary of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee, was a great organiser and with his silent efficiency, Satyamurti was able to carry the rank and file of the Congress in Tamil Nad with him. Satyamurti and Kamaraj accompanied Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his tour and saw to it that it was gone through smoothly. On Rajagopalachari's specific and special advice, Satyamurti played Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's host in Madras, putting him up in his small house in Triplicane.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the election campaign in Tamil Nad and the enthusiasm of the people was roused tremendously by his great personality. Though it was a lightning tour, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited as many important places as he could and addressed public meetings which were attended by thousands of people who came from the interior villages to see their beloved leader. All through the route huge crowds

greeted the Congress President who had often to address the crowds assembled all along the route.

The tour was a tremendous success and went off smoothly without a hitch. The arrangements were perfect and though everywhere unprecedented crowds gathered, there was perfect order and discipline. The credit for the success and efficient arrangements went to Satyamurti and his able secretary and lieutenant Kamaraj. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was overwhelmed and pleased at the great success of the tour which paved the way for the election campaign. The people's enthusiasm which knew no bounds was roused and was reflected in the elections. Satyamurti felt justifiably proud of the successful completion of the tour.

Conducting the election campaign Satyamurti started with educating the electorate who would be qualified to exercise their franchise which was on the basis of literacy, property and a few other qualifications. He appealed to all people who were qualified to enroll themselves as voters immediately. He roused the people from their usual lethargy and educated them on the election procedure.

When the year 1937 dawned, the election campaign was in full swing. Satyamurti kept himself in constant touch with Sardar Patel, who was the Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Committee. In a letter to Sardar Patel, written on April 3, 1937, Satyamurti gave some forecasts about the existing legislatures, new elections and consequent moves on the part of the Government and the successful parties. He foresaw the end of the interim Ministry in Madras. He made some very practical and useful suggestions as to how they should organise effectively from then on for contesting in the elections. He was keeping alive the "office question" by making "fighting speeches" to convert the Congress to his view in the matter of acceptance of office. This got him into hot waters. Some of his senior colleagues strongly disapproved of his move; a section of the Press—the Anglo Indian Press—played up Satyamurti's attitude as that of a rebel.

In a letter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated March 14, 1937 Satyamurti explained his position: "There have been many occasions in the past when I have differed radically from the Congress, and have never rebelled and have tried my level best to follow the programme of the Congress, to the extent to which I can. I am not going to start a new life in my 50th year after a public life of 25 years. I should like to add that I shall certainly not countenance, directly or indirectly, any attempt at disobeying the mandate of the Congress or the All India Congress Committee."

Satyamurti's first loyalty had always been to the Congress and even when he held or expressed strong views, contrary to accepted policies of the Congress, he was unwavering in his loyalty to the Congress. Early in March 1937, the Congress Members of the Madras Legislature met in Madras and decided the question of "office" by an overwhelming majority in favour of office-acceptance.

Satyamurti was spearheading the office-acceptance move and trying to convince Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and other leaders who were stoutly opposing office-acceptance mainly on the ground that the new Constitution gave such wide and sweeping powers to the Governor that nothing could be achieved by the Congress or any other party which accepted office, as whatever they did, could be nullified by the Governor. In a letter dated April 11, 1937, addressed to Mahatma Gandhi, Satyamurti, who had met Sardar Patel and Mahadev Desai (Gandhiji's Secretary), expressed his doubt if Government would respond to the generous suggestion of Gandhiji for an arbitration tribunal on the question of exercise of the powers by Governors. In his letter he raised many issues on this controversial question of exercise of powers by the Governors. All that Mahatma Gandhi and Congress leaders wanted was an assurance that the Governors would not exercise their powers against the elected ministries. Satyamurti kept up a stream of correspondence with Gandhiji and other leaders.

In the summer of 1937 there was a setback in Satyamurti's

health and he went to Mysore to recoup his health. In a letter addressed to Gandhiji on June 20, 1937, Satyamurti resumed the vexed question of "office." He had suggested to Gandhiji earlier that in the event of irreconcilable difference of opinion between a Governor and the Ministry, the Governor should, instead of exercising his over-ruling powers, ask the Ministry to resign. Gandhiji had adopted Satyamurti's suggestion and he had made the demand to the British Government on this basis. But this was not conceded by the British Government. The question went on thus, unsolved, until in the end the Congress decided to take up office and form ministries where they were in a majority.

Satyamurti who attended a meeting of the members of the Madras Legislative Assembly did not intend to speak at all, as he later explained in his letter dated March 14, 1937 to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But on a pressing invitation, he addressed the meeting though he was not a member of the Madras Legislature. "In the course of that speech", he explained, "I said I would fight strongly for the All India Congress Committee accepting the view that Congress parties, wherever they are in majorities, in the provincial legislatures, should accept office." He, however, made it clear that "there is no question of acceptance of office until and unless Congress permits" and he would "certainly agitate further within the four corners of the Congress Constitution in a perfectly constitutional manner" until the verdict was changed.

He was also anxious that "We should contest and capture the positions of Presidents, Deputy Presidents, Speaker and Deputy Speakers in all Provinces where we have majorities" as he wrote in another letter dated March 29 to Sardar Patel. In a letter to Sardar Patel written on April 3, 1937, Satyamurti made these suggestions to meet the political situation. He suggested convening Provincial Conventions consisting of Congress members of the legislatures to which pro-Congress members also should be invited. The conventions should discuss provincial programmes on the basis of the A.I.C.C. resolution. This, he felt,

was a means of keeping the 700 and odd Congress members of the legislatures busy with some work. Secondly, he wanted to educate the electorate through intense propaganda about the decision of the Congress and to prove to them that the responsibility for any breakdown would be that of the Governors and not that of the Congress; for this purpose he suggested that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru should, as President, tour the country extensively. Thirdly, he suggested that particular attention should be paid to the spread of the Congress message among Muslims, especially in the Punjab, Bengal and Sind to counteract the attempts by the Anglo Indian Press to suggest that while the Hindus were unwilling to work the Constitution, the Muslims were working it.

In March 1937, a National Convention of Congress Legislators was held under the presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Convention called upon the Congress Parliamentary parties to take the earliest opportunity to put forward, in the name of the nation, a demand, in their respective legislatures, that the people of India may form their own constitution. They were specifically asked to demand the formation of a Constituent Assembly for this purpose.

In the Autumn Session of the Central Assembly, on September 17, 1937 Satyamurti moved a resolution recommending to the Secretary of State for India and to the British Government the opinion of the House that the Government of India Act 1935 in no way represented the will of the nation and was wholly unsatisfactory and should be replaced by the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. Moving this resolution, Satyamurti stressed that he had moved the resolution not merely as a member of the Opposition but as a representative of the Indian National Congress, which, at the moment, ruled seven out of eleven provinces and hence the resolution emanated not from any so-called "irresponsible" opposition but from the most responsible body governing the country in the provincial sphere. Explaining the implications of the resolution, he said: "We want no more futile conventions and

conferences where we shall needlessly discuss, quarrel among ourselves and present the spectacle to the foreigner and to the government of a people who could not settle their differences."

Satyamurti, who had all along worked for the legislative programme had been wanting to come back to Madras and take up the leadership of the new Legislative Assembly. It went without saying that he would contest the University seat — the University Graduates' Constituency was his pocket-borough from which he could safely expect an easy walk-over. The Parliamentary Committee had approved of his candidature though it meant his giving up the Central Assembly membership.

It was in these circumstances that Rajaji made a dramatic comeback. This was so sudden and surprising that everybody, including Satyamurti, rubbed his eyes to make sure if it was true. The circumstances under which this drama was enacted are interesting as well as intriguing. Since the question of office-acceptance was in the air, the question of who should be elected the Leader of the Congress Party in the Legislature was exercising everyone's mind. Everybody outside expected and looked forward to Satyamurti becoming the Leader and Satyamurti himself was naturally looking forward to it. If it had been merely a question of Leadership of the Party in the Assembly, Satyamurti would have been the obvious unanimous choice. But, since the question of office-acceptance was in the air, and it was generally expected that the Congress would ultimately form the Ministry, all kinds of interests — linguistic, regional and others — came up and though Satyamurti's election to the provincial Assembly was assured, there were contrary forces working against his possible leadership and ultimate Premiership in the Province. The Madras Province then included Andhra, parts of Kerala and some parts of Karnataka. It was considered by those interested in the solidarity of the Congress that the leadership of the party should be an unanimous choice; for a contest would bring up ugly features. The other elements, including a powerful section of the Andhras, seemed to have been moving to put up a candidate of their own for the leadership. Well-intentioned friends of the

Congress, outside the active political ring, began thinking on lines of finding a person — or a personality — who would be acceptable to all. It was then that it was felt by these good Samaritans that a person like Rajaji would be an ideal choice acceptable to all. It was K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor of "The Hindu," who took the initiative, approached Rajaji on his own and told him that in the interests of unity and unanimity, he should come forward and offer himself for election. Though Rajaji was reluctant, he was persuaded to consider his coming back to active politics and to contest the elections. Rajaji, however, was disinclined to go about campaigning and canvassing by contesting a general seat. If he could be elected unanimously he would consider the proposal. The only constituency where he had the most chance of a near-unanimous election was the University Constituency. When this was suggested Rajaji at once asked, "What about Satyamurti?" He was already there counting on a certain victory for himself. Srinivasan, who was bent on bringing about an amicable arrangement, invited Satyamurti to his house and discussed the prospects of his leadership, with Satyamurti. Satyamurti was so buoyantly optimistic and he was so sure of his being elected the Leader of the Party that when Srinivasan told him how other forces were working behind to undermine his unquestioned position, Satyamurti was a little taken aback. But still he was optimistic and said he would face any contest and was sure of success. When Srinivasan told him that an unanimous choice of leadership would be conducive to the smooth steering of the Congress ship in the provincial waters, Satyamurti saw the force of the argument. But where could they find such a person who could command the confidence and respect of all sections? When Rajaji's name was mentioned, Satyamurti said he would only be too happy if Rajaji could be persuaded to take up the leadership, but would he? Srinivasan said, he would, on one condition however, that he should not be put to the strain of an electioneering campaign as he was not physically and temperamentally equal to go about canvassing for votes.

When Srinivasan first mooted the subject to Rajaji, Rajaji as stated earlier, had asked, "What about Satyamurti?" When he was told that Satyamurti could be persuaded to give his University Constituency to Rajaji, Rajaji agreed ultimately on condition that Satyamurti would willingly give his constituency to him. All this happened behind the scenes. So when Satyamurti said he would only be too happy if Rajaji agreed to take up the leadership and he would be too glad to work under his leadership but doubted if Rajaji could be so easily persuaded, Srinivasan called Rajaji, who was waiting in an adjacent room and the leaders met and exchanged greetings. It was a surprise for Satyamurti and he was taken aback by this "behind the scene" manoeuvre. But he got over the initial and expected shock. It was Satyamurti's hope, however, which he did not keep secret, that if and when a Ministry was formed under Rajaji's leadership, he would find a place next to Rajaji in it. Alas! Destiny willed it otherwise.

Satyamurti very magnanimously withdrew his nomination for the University Constituency and willingly offered it to Rajaji. It was a sacrifice which few would be capable of even for such a great leader as Rajaji. When Satyamurti informed one of his closest friends — a person holding high office in Mysore — he (the friend) endorsed Satyamurti's action. Satyamurti rose in the estimation of all by this unique sacrifice in the public interest.

Rajagopalachari then filed his nomination and issued an appeal to the voters of the University Constituency wherein he apologised for his not being able to personally contact every one of them and requested them to vote for him, notwithstanding his inability to approach them in person.

Satyamurti who had been campaigning for the Congress with indefatigable energy for over six months was now joined by Rajaji and between them they made intensive tours throughout the length and breadth of the Province. Satyamurti visited Andhra also and addressed huge public meetings. When he toured the West Godavari District he addressed as many as 18 meetings on a single day, which he alone could achieve. He

made lightning tours through the countryside and urban areas; there was not a town nor village left out. Such was the indomitable spirit of the great campaigner.

Then came the elections. Polling in certain areas began at the end of January and was spread over weeks till the middle of February. Everywhere the Congress won with thumping majorities. The margin of votes by which every one of the Congress members won was something phenomenal. Rajaji won by a margin of 5000 votes in a constituency of a little over 5000 votes.

Out of 215 seats for the Madras Assembly, the Congress captured 158 seats—a comfortably high majority—"brute majority" as the opponents characterised it, for the party to take up the Ministry.

Besides Madras, the Congress had absolute majority in four other major Provinces—United Province, Central Province, Bihar and Orissa. In Bombay, Bengal, Assam and North West Frontier Province, the Congress was the biggest single party. But the green signal had not yet been shown and the question of office-acceptance was still hotly debated in the Congress. Though a strong section of the Congress was for seizing power by forming ministries in the Provinces in which it was in a majority, there was an equally strong section holding out against acceptance of office. After a prolonged controversy, the Congress ultimately decided to form ministries in seven out of eleven provinces. Madras was one of the first to form the first Congress Ministry under the able leadership of the astute statesman Rajagopalachariar. Satyamurti, who had all along worked for the capture of power by accepting office, was strangely and unaccountably left out. The mystery of this political drama has not been solved, though conjectures and surmises, insinuations and open charges were made at that time to the effect that Satyamurti was the victim of a vicious conspiracy to keep him out of Madras politics. The one plausible reason given by some political wiseacres was that Satyamurti was doing such brilliant work in the Central Assembly that the High Command was unwilling to spare him for the provincial arena.

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When the Ministry was under formation in Madras and Rajagopalachariar had agreed to don the mantle of Premier (as the Chief Minister was then designated) there was a general expectation that Satyamurti would be in the first Congress Cabinet. Satyamurti himself had lost interest in his own inclusion in the Cabinet but he did expect to be consulted by Rajaji when he chose his Cabinet. Satyamurti's great disappointment and vexation was not so much as his exclusion from the Cabinet as his being ignored and not being even consulted when the ministry was chosen.

Satyamurti left for Simla to attend the Central Assembly session and when he saw in the papers, on his way to Simla via Bombay, the list of ministers in Rajagopalachariar's Cabinet, it gave him not a bit of surprise, not to mention, disappointment and pain. Though he was by then a seasoned politician, he could not understand the psychology of this politics. In Bombay he met Sardar Patel who seemed to be put out as much as Satyamurti. But the strong, silent man he was, he did not express anything then to Satyamurti. But after the latter reached Simla, Satyamurti got a letter from Sardar Patel expressing his views: "... With Bhulabhai Desai ill and you and Pant going to State Legislatures, I had almost decided to close down the show at the Central Legislature and now that you have been spared, I have decided to run the show." What was a loss to the Province was a gain to all-India politics. Satyamurti plunged himself with renewed vigour in the Parliamentary work in the Central Assembly.

As A. S. Iyengar, the veteran journalist (who for some time held the post of Principal Information Officer of the Government of India) has rightly described: "Satyamurti never rose to greater heights than when he did this unparalleled act of effacement. He gave no greater lie to his traducers and critics who thought that Satyamurti was after office. He never held office even for a single minute either under the Congress or under the bureaucracy, though others have gone on and tasted the fruits of office."*

*"All Through the Gandhian Era" — A. S. Iyengar.

Once, after he had come to the Central Assembly in Delhi, he was sounded by high authorities, through an intermediary, if he was willing to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of the Madras University. Any other person of lesser calibre would have grabbed the office. But not Satyamurti. He was not willing to shroud his talents in an academic robe nor exchange his seat in the Central Legislature to the cushioned comfort of a Vice-Chancellor's armchair, and enjoy the cool sea breeze in the Marina. He was of a different mettle. He was born to suffer; he enjoyed suffering in his own way for the country's cause. Not all the Vice-Chancellorships could have persuaded him to exchange his freedom to talk for the cosy comforts of any sinecure position or post.

The Lion Roars Again

ONE OF SATYAMURTI'S most brilliant contributions in Parliamentary debate was his participation in the Finance Bill discussion in 1937. On March 15, during the second reading of the Finance Bill, Satyamurti tore to shreds Sir James Grigg's budget. He covered almost every aspect of it; he criticised among others the sugar duty and silver duty. Sir Frank Noyce, the Commerce Member, also became his target. He flayed him for increasing the postcard rate to nine pies (from six pies). "I am sorry my honourable friend, Sir Frank Noyce, is going away with this tragic inheritance behind him. I wish it had been given to him to leave behind him the half anna card but the honourable Sir James Grigg is relentless and the honourable Sir Frank Noyce is to leave the shores of this country with this regret in his mind that he cannot say that his parting gift is the half anna card."

Satyamurti was always a champion of the poor. Quite often, in the Assembly, he had espoused the poor man's cause and exposed the poverty stalking the land. On this occasion also he took up the refrain of poverty and said: "Sir, our poverty today is so great that, in my country alone, beggars fight for life and death over the leavings of a rich man's food." It had been a sadly familiar sight to see the poor people gathering outside a marriage house — called "Kalyana Mandapam". As soon as the plantain leaves, on which the guests had partaken food were thrown out with the leavings of a rich feast, the poor people were seen rushing out avidly and helping themselves of the throwaway delicacies. Satyamurti described it thus: "I have seen it in every town, and there are thousands of people to whom a full meal is a romance and they never tasted it in their lives."

"Unemployment stalks the land", he continued, "hundreds and thousands and the thousands of educated men and women have no employment ... then on the other hand he got from high quarters the advice: 'Drink more milk.' At least you should be human not to insult us in that fashion." "Stud-bulls — what can they do". (The favourite theme of Lord Linlithgow the Viceroy.) "Imperial Agricultural Research — for whom are you doing that?" he asked. He said nothing was being done for handloom weavers.

Then, with biting sarcasm, he lampooned Sir James Grigg. Taking his speech sentence by sentence and slashing it to pieces: "And then he starts up huge series of paragraphs. A man, who cannot answer a categorical question like that by an emphatic positive or confident negative and tries to argue in a whole page of printed matter with a lot of participle and conjunctions, must be very weak in his own conviction."

Taking another statement of Sir James Grigg he vivisected it. Sir James Grigg had said:

"With an increase in prosperity and activity the money lender will once more be able to employ his idle funds."

"What a poor pathetic conclusion; that my countrymen should be poor enough and be compelled to borrow; they will borrow from money-lenders who will charge exorbitant rates of interest and they earn greater incomes, and pay more income tax. Is that a fair way of administering the finances of a country?"

Sir James Grigg had said:

"We must be careful not to exaggerate the importance of a gap of one or two crores in a budget of 80 crores."

Satyamurti's acid comments were: "How is it one crore? One or two crores — this is a school-boy's English, and not a Finance Member's English, when you are dealing with such serious matters and you are $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores in deficit. Therefore he says: 'Everything is all right. God is in His Heaven. I am the Finance Member. Everything will be all right.'"

Sir James Grigg had concluded:

"On the whole I don't think I will be indulging in unjustifiable optimism."

"This is a beautiful gradation of English" observed Satyamurti in answer. "On the whole — that is one qualifying phrase."

"Of course, I am always presupposing the absence of internal disorder and external strife", Sir James Grigg had said. Satyamurti replied: "Of course, he is never to blame. That is the robust optimism of the Finance Member. I suggest, Sir, that language is given to us not to conceal our thoughts. I think my honourable friend should realise after understanding what I said that his optimism is wholly misplaced."

With his characteristic flourish Satyamurti added: "I want to know, who is running the protective policy — Sir Frank Noyce, Sir James Grigg or Sir Mohammed Zafrulla Khan?" Reverting to his original theme of office-acceptance, Satyamurti said, "This Act (India Act 1935) must go and the earlier it goes the better and if we accept office it will be to break the Act at the earliest possible moment."

Satyamurti concluded his speech with another of his characteristic poetic flights:

"Hypocrisy! Thy name is Indian Democracy!"

Then he quoted a great British Queen:

"Rome, for empire, far renowned

Rome shall perish!

Write the word

In the blood she has spilt".

Using the word "Britain" for "Rome" I say:

"Britain, for empire, far renowned

Britain shall perish!

Write that word

In the hunger, the poverty,

the ignorance, the sufferings

and the hypocrisy

That she has inflicted on

the millions of this country."

Who would not be tempted to join in the applause he got then!

Two days later, on March 17, Satyamurti's voice was again heard when an amendment was moved to reduce the Salt Tax.

He "very respectfully" asked the Finance Member a question: "Every time we put forward a financial motion, his first answer and his last answer is, 'You want protection and therefore you must pay taxes which I want to levy on this country.' You do not care for the consumers: I will not care for the consumers: between us, let us murder them. I will not put on the salt tax. You put on consumers' taxes and they will be between the devil and the deep sea."

How true this rings even today, after three and odd decades!

Satyamurti continued relentlessly his thrusts at the Finance Member:

"I take it, Sir, my friend, who is a very good student of economics, knows this principle of taxation—taxes on necessities and vices like drink are very bad. Does he like to tax drinks and the necessities?"

Sir James Grigg: "I don't agree with it".

Off shot Satyamurti's quick dart: "My friend does not agree with any theory except his own."

Reverting to the poor man's salt which was being taxed, Satyamurti rounded off his speech by saying: "If there is to be any priority of relief, relief should first be given to those who consume salt, the poorest in the land, rather than the rich men...."

The amendment to reduce the Salt Tax from Rs 1.25 to Re 1 per maund was carried by a majority.

In August 1937, 700 political prisoners who were termed "terrorists" and who had been deported to the Andamans, went on hunger strike. Satyamurti promptly brought the question before the Assembly by an adjournment motion on August 25. He made a very incisive and powerful speech—one of his shortest speeches—pleading for the prisoners. Mohanlal Saxena, Congress Member of the Assembly, who had already been doing "continuous disinterested work on behalf of these people" as Satyamurti aptly described it, had been in correspondence with the Viceroy. Satyamurti stated that he saw "a human touch in the Viceroy's reply to Mr. Mohanlal Saxena, but

the touch, I regret to say, is not human enough." The Viceroy had stated in his reply "were the Government to give way, the gain would be illusory and momentary." "Would it be illusory and momentary to save 200 lives?" asked Satyamurti (Akil Chandra Datta, the Deputy President, corrected him by giving the figure as 700).

"I wish to remind his Lordship", said Satyamurti (referring to the Viceroy) "that life is larger than logic." "I submit", he continued, "that this matter should be treated in a more human and more generous spirit. He referred to the "callous attitude of the Government" in giving a reply to a question in the following terms: "Adequate arrangements are made for funerals of hunger-strikers if necessity arose." "Surely, Mr. President, may I put this question to my friends? If 700 Englishmen or Scotsmen were hunger-striking in Dartmoor, would any Home Secretary survive even a trice if he exhibited before them arrangements for their funerals?", asked Satyamurti. "Let me say, as a Hindu, and as an Indian, that those who sacrifice for great causes will always be respected in my country." He quoted the Upanishadic doctrine, "*Na Karmanā na pōjayā na dhanena, tyāgēnē-kēna amritatvam amānasuhu* — Not by deed nor by wealth, but only by sacrifice is immortality achieved." He warned the Government that if there were deaths among the prisoners, a trail of anger and misunderstanding would be roused in the country. He wanted the prisoners to be repatriated to their provinces. Satyamurti said: "As against Sir Henry Craik's picture of a 'paradise' my honourable friend Raizada Hansraj calls it a 'hell on earth'. Therefore do not send them to paradise or hell but send them to their own provinces, be they paradise or be they hell."

The adjournment motion was carried by a majority with great acclamation.

This is one of the many instances to show that Satyamurti's interest was not confined to set subjects like budget or repressive laws and the like but to a wide range of topics—many of them

to be viewed from not merely a political angle but from a human point of view, as in this instance of Andaman prisoners.

On September 23, while participating in the discussion on a resolution on economies in general Government expenditure, he called on the Government to observe economies in expenditure. He instanced the army, expenditure on which could be saved to the tune of ten crores of rupees by the substitution of Indian troops for British troops, as admitted by the Finance Member. This, he said, was the acid test of the sincerity of the Government in trying to work the Government of India Act.

"Just at this moment we are governing seven of the eleven provinces of India", he proudly said. He asked the Finance Member to take note of this that he was speaking no longer as an irresponsible Member of an irresponsible Opposition. When he quoted Lord Brentford "one of the frankest of Britishers" as admitting in a public speech that "every fifth man in Britain lived in India", Sir James Grigg interrupted and said, "I don't accept him as evidence"; Satyamurti's instant retort was "you will not accept any evidence which is against you."

"Do you honestly believe that your countrymen are spending money in my country for nothing? You are doing it because it pays you to do so. You want to exploit my country; and if you come and tell me that you are doing it out of your benevolence of heart, I do suggest that in carrying on these discussions some more regard may be had to truth and less to fiction."

"Sir, I am here to say on behalf of the seven Provincial Governments that we do not want the British troops for internal security."

He compared the Indian ministers in the seven provinces who were drawing only Rs. 500 per mensem to the Civil Servants in Government of India who were drawing Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000 per mensem. "I do suggest to the honourable Finance Member that it is easy to get cheap laughter of a few European and Indian colleagues on that side of the House who are highly paid, but a

problem like this is met by statesmanship and not by cheap buffoon-like methods."

Satyamurti as usual quoted in Sanskrit, this time Kalidasa, who had said in one of his plays that taxes should be collected only for the welfare of the people. He had another dig at the Finance Member, Sir James Grigg:

"My honourable friend publicly prayed in this House, without the aid of the Ecclesiastical Department, that the Congress might accept office in the Provinces. The prayer has been granted although it came from an unfaithful heart like that of Sir James Grigg, but still that has been granted."

He concluded his speech with one of his characteristic perorations: "We heard again and again 'we are protecting India.' What is the India you are protecting? The hunger, the poverty, and the nakedness of my countrymen? We want India to be protected but we want every Indian man, woman and child to be well-fed, well-clothed, well-educated, well-looked after, living in decent houses as you live in your own country."

The resolution was carried by a majority, 70 voting for and 51 against.

The other major contributions of Satyamurti during the session was his able presentation of the case for constituting a Constituent Assembly. On September 17, 1937, Satyamurti moved a resolution asking the Governor-General to convey to the British Government the opinion of the House that the Government of India Act, 1935, in no way represented the will of the Nation and was wholly unsatisfactory and should be replaced by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. He said he was moving the resolution not merely as a humble member of the Opposition, but as a humble representative of the Indian National Congress which now governs seven out of eleven provinces in India and hoped to govern the other four provinces very soon. (Satyamurti was never tired of driving in the fact of Congress ruling in eleven Provinces). He explained what the Constituent Assembly meant. Satyamurti also constantly brought into the picture Mahatma Gandhi, whenever the opportunity

arose. "The last page of history of the world has not yet been written and, thank God, there is a great man in this country who can still write pages of eloquent history."

Then, he analysed the Federation idea. He again brought Mahatma Gandhi into the picture, with an apt Sanskrit quotation from the great poet Bhavabhuti, the essence of which was that those who are Rishis, when they speak, the meaning runs after the words.

*"Laukikānām Sādhūnam
Artham Vāg anuvartate
Rishīnam purā dhyānam
Vācham Artho anudhāvate"*

Satyamurti applied this maxim to Mahatma Gandhi.

"Mahatma Gandhi said 'Let Congress accept office'. The Congress accepted office. Mahatma Gandhi has said that Great Britain and India must either come to terms or enter into one of the bitterest struggles. Believe me, Mr. President, if the latter contingency arises, we will enter on the last and bitterest struggles that India has ever engaged in." How prophetic these words were, later history proved. Only Satyamurti lived to be involved in the last and bitterest of struggles but did not live to see its successful end. He concluded his speech with this note of confidence: "There is yet a chance, so long as Mahatma Gandhi lives, to arrive at a friendly settlement and grasp his hand of friendship.... we shall attain freedom of this country very soon, sooner than our friends hope and enemies fear—and it is in this confidence that I move the resolution, because, believe me, Mr. President, when once a great people make up their mind, to obtain their freedom, no power on earth, not even Great Britain,... can stand in the way." (Applause).

Satyamurti, who was conservative in many respects—or to put it more correctly, was not an extremist—had however some very progressive views. At a time when many public men and politicians did not even think of it, he was the first to express his views in favour of nationalisation of some of the public wel-

fare and utility services like life insurance and transport (railways and road transport).

Insurance business was initially in the hands of foreign companies, most of them British and they were of course the pioneers to introduce insurance in India. Later, Indian insurance companies came into existence. The Government had passed a law to regulate insurance companies. In September 1937, the Government introduced an amendment to the Insurance Bill.

Satyamurti seized the opportunity to give out his views. He said, "I believe that the interests of our country, from any point of view, demand the business of insurance ought to be nationalised....I have no doubt, that when the Government comes into the hands of the people of this country, almost the very first thing they will do will be to nationalise the business of life insurance." He did not live to see his prophecy come true 25 years after.

The Congress which was on the Committee on the Bill had to compromise by agreeing to certain concessions given to foreign insurance companies. While speaking on the Bill which he analysed, as usual, clause by clause, Satyamurti admitted "We have agreed to swallow the bitter pill." Addressing the European group, he said "you may be happy today you have got this, but he laughs best who laughs last" (one of his favourite clichés). "And I suggest, Mr. President, that when they have made us eat the bitter fruit of humiliation, of treating strangers on the same footing as Indians, when we felt cribbed, cabined and confined, when we wanted to protect Indian insurers as against non-Indian insurers, and UK insurers, when we felt we were handicapped, I want my friends to remember that it has left a feeling in our hearts, which will fructify sooner or later...when-ever we said something reasonable and Government thought we were reasonable, there was a cry in some parts of the House 'Look at this unholy alliance.' But these very sections of the House, when they thought we were unreasonable and did not respond to Government, called the heavens to witness and said 'Look at the Congress fellows, they are unreasonable. They will

never see and the Government is right' ". He cited the famous Sanskrit poet Bhartrihari (who seemed to have been his favourite) whose aphorism he quoted: "If a man does not speak, he is dumb; if he speaks he is garrulous." (*Mounanmookhaha; Pravachanapatur Vāchakō Jalpakō Vā*) Mr. F. E. James remarked: "You are not dumb". Satyamurti's instant retort was: "Nor are you, although there is greater reason for you to be dumb."

Concluding his speech, Satyamurti said "Last but not least" (another cliché of his) "I repeat what I said this morning, that the success or otherwise of the Bill depends to a very large extent on the personality of the first Superintendent of Insurance. I hope that in making the appointment no racial or communal consideration will be brought into effect, but consideration purely of efficiency, integrity, qualification, drive and enthusiasm will be taken into account."

Satyamurti, paying a glowing tribute to Sir N. N. Sircar, the Law Member who was responsible for the Bill said, "I hope contrary to what he saw on the floor of the House, the Law Member, in his retirement, wherever he may be, in office or out of it, will have the satisfaction of having rendered a great, lasting service to the progress of sound Indian insurance." He was generous in his praise of the Law Member and said "I should like to pay, unreservedly, on behalf of myself and the great Congress party which I have the honour to serve, our unstinted tribute of admiration to the great ability and the great industry that the Hon'ble Law Member has brought to bear on the measure... In his case, I have always increasingly felt the truth of the dictum that 'ability is character' ... I was pleased when, on the floor of the House, as I sense all the Indian members were, when he spoke, as any Congressman would have spoken, for the protection of Indian rights against non-Indian... he realises that, if the best interests of the country should be served, they should be served by our being Indians first and Indians last."

That was Satyamurti — who was chivalrous to the opponent and was willing to give the devil its due.

Satyamurti, who had strong nationalism deeply rooted in him, moved an adjournment motion on October 7, 1937 to express disapproval of the appointment of a foreign expert as Economic Adviser. In a short, scathing speech he charged the Finance Member, Sir James Grigg with wanting that his admirers should follow His Master's Voice. The adjournment motion was carried by a large majority.

The year 1937, which started excitingly when the Congress party assumed office and formed ministries in seven provinces, was one of triumph as well as disappointment for Satyamurti, who was, from the beginning, pleading for office-acceptance and in the end succeeded in converting the High Command of the Congress to that view; the disappointment was that he was left out of the picture when Congress assumed power in Madras — the disappointment was more keenly felt by his friends, colleagues and co-workers, not to mention the people in general, than himself. The loss was not certainly his. But the country gained, where the Province lost, as expressed by Sardar Patel, without him the Congress Party would have suffered in the Central Assembly. He amply justified the confidence Sardar Patel — and Gandhiji — had in his ability as a parliamentarian.

Ill-health dogged Satyamurti and at the beginning of 1938, when the Central Assembly was in its budget session, Satyamurti could not put forth his usual brilliance.

On April 1, 1938 when his resolution calling upon the Government to consult the Assembly whenever trade agreements were proposed to be entered into came up, K. Santhanam had to move the resolution in his absence and in doing so he made a reference to Satyamurti's health and inability to participate in the discussions: "I have no doubt that the whole House is keenly disappointed, that the mover, owing to ill-health, is not able to support the resolution with his inimitable eloquence. I am also sure that all of us hope that by the time the Assembly meets in Simla, he would have sufficiently recovered in health to take the part he had been taking ever since he entered the House." The hope was fulfilled and when the Assembly met

in Simla in August, Satyamurti was back on the legislature front, and he was in full form.

Almost his first sally in this session was made when the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was brought forward by the Government. The Bill was directed against persons dissuading others from joining the Army and taking part in any war the British Empire may become engaged in; condign punishment was proposed for those committing this "offence".

Satyamurti's speech, opposing the Bill, was one of the most brilliant and telling and lasted three hours. He made, as usual, a critical analysis of the Bill in all its aspects and tried to show how it attempted to curb the freedom of individuals and the country. The speech which the Rt. Hon. Mackenzie King, Premier of Canada, made before the League of Nations at its Plenary Session, came in handy and Satyamurti quoted from it: "The Canadian Parliament reserves to itself the right to declare, in the light of circumstances existing at that time, to what extent, if at all, Canada will participate in conflicts in which the other members of the Commonwealth engage in."

Satyamurti asked the Defence Secretary Sir Ogilvie, "Will the Hon. Defence Secretary accuse the Rt. Hon'ble Mackenzie King of want of loyalty when he said these?" Mr. Ogilvie promptly replied "Certainly not". He was trapped and Satyamurti got enough and said "I am quite content with the answer. What is meat for Canada is poison for India."

"What we object to is that our manpower should be sought to be exploited and that those who survived the hunger and starvation which have been imposed on our country, should become merely tools in your mercenary, imperialist defence forces," he said. He reiterated his faith in the gospel of peace, preached by Mahatma Gandhi. "You may laugh at us today; but if Western Europe goes on, as she goes on now, I have no doubt that soon humanity is going to be destroyed in the manner that even H. G. Wells has not dreamt of in his book. It seems to me today that there is only one hope and that is held out by the gospel of non-violence and being friends with all the world

and enemies of none. That is the only gospel which can save humanity today." The amendment Bill was, however, passed by a narrow majority.

At the last reading of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, Satyamurti spoke again on August 24, 1938 with emotion and vehemence: "I want to conclude on one note. I said the British Empire's disappearance will mean happiness, peace and prosperity in the world. I was provoked into that statement by the Hon'ble the Deputy Secretary's (Defence) rhetorical statement 'what will happen if the British Empire disappears'. Let me make my position clear. I have no use for any imperialism, British, German, French, Italian, Japanese or even Indian, although in some of my vain moments, I imagine that I may conquer England and sit on those Treasury Benches and face all these gentlemen on those benches and teach them how to treat the opposition. I should like to have power at least for the purpose of showing them how to govern a country better than they are governing now." He ended up his speech in a prophetic tone: "This country will obtain her freedom — when after 20, 30, or 40 years hence our children and our children's children will be talking of those days when we were slaves of England, they will ask themselves, what their fathers and forefathers did in those days. For God's sake, please do leave them the heritage of saying 'our fathers and forefathers fought a good non-violent battle for the freedom of India'; but do not leave them the ugly heritage of saying that their fathers and forefathers voted for this despicable Bill."

It was Satyamurti who, as early as 1938, proposed and urged the nationalisation of transport. When the Motor Vehicles Bill came up for discussion in the Assembly on September 17, Satyamurti made a powerful plea for nationalisation of transport.

"I am one of those who believe that all transport in this country should be nationalised sooner or later", he declared. His wish was fulfilled 15 years later, when he was no more there to acclaim it.

"I want a Central Transport Authority, which will control not

only rail transport and road transport but also inland water transport and coastal shipping and air transport and village country cart which is bound to survive." Though there are Central Authorities for the various kinds of transport, the type of Central Authority co-ordinating all types of transport is yet to come." "It is only such an authority", he said, "that can help to develop the transport of this country and to rebuild our villages, which are now cut off from the rest of India, by having good roads and good means of transport, ranging from the country cart to the aeroplane so that an all-round development may take place and railways may no longer claim the monopoly of a superior service, but become real servants of the people".

How far-sighted he was can be judged from this very sound, constructive proposal.

In the last winter session of the Assembly in 1938, the Indian Income Tax Bill (Amendment) was introduced. Having played a part during this Bill, it was somewhat unusual for Satyamurti (in his own words) to have been a silent spectator of the fight which went on in the House and outside. But he opened up on December 12 and supported the motion for the Bill during the third reading. In the absence of the Leader of the Party, it fell to Satyamurti's lot "to answer the very severe charges levelled by the Secretary of the Congress Nationalist Party, against the Congress Party." He justified the Congress Party's attitude and said, "We claim to be practical men: when we see a good thing we recognise it and we take it whatever the giver's nature otherwise may be." He enumerated the gains obtained by the Bill—the first being the slab system, which he hailed as a concession to the poorer assesseees, five sixths of the total number. The second gain was the constitution of the Appellate Tribunal. Then there were other welcome features like concessions given, the accrual basis etc. He said there were only two principles which should govern Income Tax and they were, according to him, the maximum revenue to the State and minimum injustice to the assesseees — of the two principles the

first has always been uppermost, the second has never been considered a principle. Satyamurti made a rapid review of the Bill almost section by section and made a fair comment on each of them. In conclusion, he said, "I trust that this Bill will at least have convinced them that it will be more profitable to keep themselves open both in their brains and in their hearts getting the best out of all parties in the House for the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people of this country and not to quarrel with us."

Came 1939, it was a year which was momentous in many ways. The Western World witnessed the rise of the Great Dictators, Mussolini and Hitler whose ambitions were unbounded and Europe tottered under their heels. While Mussolini's flag was flying mainly over Italy and neighbouring countries, the shadow of Hitler's Swastika was cast over Western and Eastern Europe. The Titans were globbling up country after country. But the British Empire was so far secure and Britannia still ruled the waves. Though the world was shaking with the major political upheavals, India enjoyed the peace of slavery under a foreign yoke.

The Central Assembly and Legislatures met as usual and debates went on as usual. The Budget Session of the Central Assembly began on February 3, 1939. During the debate on the Public Accounts Committee, Satyamurti made a brilliant and lucid exposition of the Committee. "The main functions of this Committee, year after year, have been to see that there is no extravagance in expenditure beyond that sanctioned amount, that there is no rush expenditure." He paid a tribute to the Auditor-General as being "absolutely independent" — a rare tribute. He paid a compliment to Sir James Grigg who was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. "He has done well, as any other man could have done in similar circumstances", complimented Satyamurti, who never grudged praise where it was due.

In conclusion, recognising the important role of the Public Accounts Committee, Satyamurti said, "I trust this House or its successor will have always a watchful, vigilant and alert Chairman

who will not be too much impressed by the difficulties of departments, and last but not least, this Government or its successor and their officers will learn to recognise in the Public Accounts Committee a friend, not an enemy."

When the Indian Finance Bill came up for discussion on March 21, 1939 Satyamurti lost no time in discharging his parting shots at his favourite target, the Finance Member, Sir James Grigg. "This is the fifth and last year of the Honourable Sir James Grigg's stewardship of the finances of this country and I think, Sir, I am doing no injustice to him if I ask the House to consider and pronounce its verdict on his five years' stewardship of the finances of a great country." He laid down certain tests to judge from: were the people more prosperous, had the purchasing power of the millions of this country increased to any appreciable extent and had the standard of life of the people been raised, he asked. He himself answered all these questions in the negative. He then went into detail and analysed the various aspects of the finances of the country under Sir James Grigg's stewardship and tried to show how miserably the Finance Member had failed. He enumerated the Finance Member's acts of omission and commission, citing, among other things, the rupee ratio, revenue tariff, railway finance, the financial relationship between the Centre and the Provinces after the introduction of provincial autonomy, defence expenditure, banking and credit structure, impact of excise and customs duties, protection of Indian industries, tariff board, posts and telegraphs etc. In fact he made such an exhaustive analysis that there was not one subject under the Finance Member's portfolio which Satyamurti left out. On every one of the subjects, he had figures and facts to support his arguments showing what a thorough study he had made of the subjects.

He did not leave the other Members of the Government and their Departments in peace. Railways and Shipping; Law and Order; Commerce; External Affairs; Defence; Education, Health and Lands; Indians Overseas — all these along with the Members in charge of these subjects came under the fire of Satyamurti. Concluding, he expressed his gladness that Sir James Grigg met

Mahatma Gandhi not once but twice and recalled the Viswamitra-Vasista episode in the Ramayana wherein, Viswamitra, who was a Kshatriya king, wanted to win from Vasista the sage, the Kamadenu, (the cow which met all the wishes of the owner) by sheer valour, strength and brute force, but Vasista resisted it successfully by simply planting in front of the cow his crutch which had been invested with spiritual strength. The defeated and crest-fallen Viswamitra could only acclaim "Fie on material power; the power of the Brahmin is much greater than of the Kshatriya" (i.e. physical power) ("*Brahma tējō balam balam dhik kshatriya balam balam*"). He spiced the tail-end of his speech with an apt quotation from Kalidasa:

"*Prajānamēva bhutyārtham Satavyō Balim agrahit*". "The king has a right to collect taxes from his subjects only for the material welfare of the people who pay the tax."

"That principle is conspicuous by its absence in this (Finance) Bill."

This may sound antiquated in modern times, in the present context.

In a prophetic and wishful-thinking mood, he ended his hour-long speech with these words, "This country will have Purna Swaraj; complete independence, and when that time comes we shall pass the Bill of a real responsible Finance Minister of a sovereign government in this country interested in the welfare, happiness and prosperity of this country."

It is for the posterity of Finance Ministers to contemplate deeply on these profound thoughts.

During the discussion on the Indian Tariff Bill (Amendment), Satyamurti referred to the protection of Punjab wheat because of the "vigorous personality of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, Premier of the Punjab, and Sir Mohammed Zafrulla Khan (Commerce Member); he deplored that the Government had failed to give protection to Madras rice as "we have no voice near the thrones of the mighty." A Sikh member from West Punjab intervened and said, "You will soon have Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar as Commerce Member."

Satyamurti snapped: "It is appeal from Philip Sober to Philip Drunk". Another member asked "who is the sober and who is the drunk" to which Satyamurti's instant reply was "I do not know the habits of Government members for I do not dine or lunch with them."

The Guns Boom

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939: On that fateful day at dawn the trumpets blared, guns boomed and Britain and France were at war with Germany. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow proclaimed on the same day that India was at war with Germany. This caused great resentment among all parties and leaders and the people, as the Viceroy had acted without either consulting the leaders or referring the matter to the Central Assembly. The Viceroy invited the leaders of various parties including Mahatma Gandhi and Jinnah and others to enlist their support for the War. Gandhiji who responded to the invitation had an interview with the Viceroy. He told the Viceroy that he had his sympathies with England and France from "a purely humanitarian point of view". He came back from the interview "empty handed without any understanding, open or secret."

The Viceroy again invited Mahatma Gandhi to Simla for further discussions and, in response, Gandhiji went to Simla and met the Viceroy on the 5th. The Viceroy had also invited the other leaders and Babu Rajendra Prasad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru met him on October 3, and discussed the major points, viz. Britain's war aims, extent to which effect may be given by Britain on her aims in India and Congress cooperation in the war effort. Jinnah also met the Viceroy on the same day as Gandhiji and C. Rajagopalachari, who had also been invited, met the Viceroy on October 13.

The Viceroy issued a long statement which satisfied nobody. Gandhiji called it profoundly disappointing and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Babu Rajendra Prasad condemned it.

In Madras, Satyamurti, C. Rajagopalachariar and other leaders

denounced the Viceroy's statement. They addressed public meetings explaining the Congress stand.

The Congress Working Committee called upon the Congress Ministries in the Provinces to resign in protest against the involvement of India in the War, against her consent. Consequently, all the Congress Ministries resigned. The Working Committee also called upon the Congress Party in the Central Assembly to abstain from attending the Assembly sessions except, formally, to keep their seats.

Gandhiji was being pressed by the extremist elements in the Congress to launch a Civil Disobedience movement again. Gandhiji resisted it all along, as he felt there could be no civil resistance so long as the Viceroy was exploring possibilities of a settlement. Satyamurti was not happy over the Congress giving up power, as he always felt that the parliamentary front should be kept alive as a fighting front within the Assembly. He did not like the idea of leaving the Assembly arena free to the elements and parties adverse to national interests. But being a disciplined soldier he fell in line with the Congress Party leadership in abstaining from attending the Assembly in obedience to the mandate of the Congress Working Committee. The Assembly became a dull and a routine drone of the Government and barring the Congress Nationalists under M.S. Aney's leadership, there was no other organised opposition to the Government's autocratic rule. Satyamurti was, however, never tired of arguing that it was detrimental to the interests of the country to leave the legislative field for the jackals to play and maraud about.

When all avenues of peace and settlement between the Congress and the Government had been tried and failed, even Gandhiji's patience was lost. With deep disappointment, and a heavy heart, Gandhiji now proposed to start a new type of Satyagraha confined to select individuals. On October 13, 1940, the Congress Working Committee, at its meeting, approved of Gandhiji's plan for individual civil disobedience to be offered by a limited number of Satyagrahis chosen by Gandhiji. Gandhiji declared, "This will be the last civil disobedience which I will

conduct. Naturally, I want it to be as flawless as it can be." It was indeed the last Satyagraha launched or led by Gandhiji.

Gandhiji chose his first batch of satyagrahis and the very first chosen was Vinoba Bhave whom he described as the only satyagrahi. As usual, there was a spate of arrests and all the top Congress leaders were soon in jail. Jawaharlal Nehru, always first in such fights, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Pant and other leaders were soon behind prison bars. In Madras, Prakasam, Gopal Reddi, Dr. T.S.S. Rajan were all jailed. C. Rajagopalachari was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment on December 4.

Though the movement was supposed to be limited to the selected few, the number of satyagrahis in jail by the middle of 1941 swelled to 14,000.

During the turmoil, Satyamurti was actively in correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and others and arguing vigorously on some of the vital questions exercising the minds of the leaders.

He wrote to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on January 30, 1940 about separate electorates which, as he had already written to him before, were "wholly inconsistent with democratic government or even decent government." He characterised Jinnah's demands as unreasonable and "if they are to be conceded, especially coalition government in the Provinces, no democratic government is possible."

The Congress Working Committee had issued a directive to the Congress Party in the Assembly asking the Congress members to attend the Assembly session for the limited purpose of opposing the Supplementary Finance Bill, seeking to finance the war effort. In pursuance of this directive of the Working Committee Bhulabhai Desai, Satyamurti and other Congress members attended the Assembly session in November 1940.

Satyamurti opened the opposition attack on the Finance Bill on November 11, 1940. It was one of the longest speeches of Satyamurti made in the Assembly, lasting for nearly one hour and a half and it was his last star performance in the Assembly.

With his usual razor-edge sharpness he made a brilliant array of his arguments against the British Government in involving India in the War without her consent and making her pay for the defence of Britain. Satyamurti summarised the Congress demand thus: "We want only this: that there should be a declaration of independence here and now, to be implemented after the War, no doubt with a national government at the Centre, representative of the main parties in the House and then we will help in the defence of India." Challenging the British Government's excuse that India was too divided and hence the reins of Government could not be fully entrusted to India, Satyamurti declared, "We can and will settle our quarrels. You are the fly in the ointment. Therefore, make yourself scarce and if you will not make yourself a nuisance, we have every chance of our settling the quarrel." Referring to the British Prime Minister Churchill's call, Satyamurti made this sarcastic comment: "Mr. Winston Churchill has come down to 'survival'. By all means survive; but why should I be frightfully enthusiastic about your survival? Why my own freedom and my own country be placed in jeopardy? Why should I bother about your survival?"

"Many emperors have lived and gone", he continued, "the world has not gone with them. You had two centuries of empire. Go. Why should you survive ... But you say merely 'I want to survive'. Survive. Why ask me to bear you on my back?"

During the speech there was a short interlude between him and Jinnah. The latter had twitted Satyamurti—and the Congress—by making a sarcastic reference to non-violence. This set Satyamurti on an explanation of the Congress creed of non-violence. Interrupting, Jinnah said with his characteristically pontifical attitude, "I did not expect the honourable member to give us a lecture on the virtues of non-violence. What I said was, when he was expressing his ire and anger, it was opposed to non-violence."

Satyamurti: "No, Sir, I am glad to be taught a lesson."

Jinnah: "If I am wrong, why be angry."

Satyamurti: "I shall control my anger in the hope that he will

follow my example. I shall be quite content if Mr. Jinnah also ceases to be angry. That will be good for the country."

Jinnah: "I do not believe in non-violence."

Satyamurti: "I do not believe in being angry."

Concluding his speech, Satyamurti appealed to Britain and said that she should do the right thing by India establish a national government, trust the people and offer India the same citizenship which Churchill offered to France after the collapse of that country.

After eight days of debate and after Bhulabhai Desai had wound up the debate with an equally brilliant indictment of Britain, the Supplementary Finance Bill which was to finance Britain's war effort, was put to vote and the Bill was rejected by 55 votes to 53. This was a triumph for the Congress. The Assembly was adjourned *sine die*.

Satyamurti returned home, to Madras, after the Assembly session and resumed his campaign by addressing public meetings. He was a conscientious legislator and every time he came back from the Assembly session he felt it his duty to report to the people of his constituency of all the happenings in the Assembly. On November 30, both he and C. Rajagopalachariar addressed a huge public meeting in Madras. They explained the implications of the individual Satyagraha movement which had been launched by Mahatma Gandhi.

Most of the top leaders had offered individual Satyagraha and courted imprisonment. C. Rajagopalachariar who also offered satyagraha on December 4, 1940 was arrested and sentenced. Satyamurti could contain himself no longer and he sought Gandhiji's permission to offer satyagraha. Gandhiji's message approving of Satyamurti's offering Satyagraha was conveyed to him by Mahadev Desai, who said in his letter, "Bapu is happy to hear that the doctor has given you a clean bill of health. He hopes, however, you will take good care of your health in His Majesty's guest house."

On December 12, 1940, Satyamurti addressed a public meeting in Madras, on the eve of his offering Satyagraha.

On the morning of December 13, after giving due notice to the Commissioner of Police, Satyamurti finished his daily rituals of worship and came out of his house, half an hour before the scheduled time of his offering Satyagraha. A huge crowd had collected in front of his house. Kamaraj, his faithful disciple, was the first to greet him. The crowd cheered him and amidst cries of "Jai" Satyamurti walked to the place from where he was to address the people and offer Satyagraha. He addressed a few words to the assembled crowd. He said India had been drawn into the war without the consent of the people and he exhorted the people not to help in the war effort. He was repeatedly greeted with cheers from the assembled crowd. Before he could continue further, he was arrested and taken to the Presidency Magistrate's court and tried. At the trial he made a brief statement before the court: "The least one can do without deliberately seeking to embarrass the Government is to say to the world and to our people that until India's freedom is assured, India can have no part or lot in the war."

He was convicted and sentenced to nine months' simple imprisonment. His health was none too good and he was having heart trouble. His health deteriorated further in the Vellore Jail, where he was undergoing the term of imprisonment and so he was taken from Vellore to Madras and admitted in the General Hospital for treatment, still under custody. Just a few days before his release, he was transferred to the Madras Penitentiary. It was during his stay in the General Hospital that Satyamurti wrote a series of letters to his daughter, Lakshmi, on several important and interesting topics. The letters were later published in book form under the title, "At the Threshold of Life."*

*Published by Asia Publishing House.

XVII

The Voice in the Wilderness

SATYAMURTI WAS RELEASED on August 23, 1941, his birthday (according to the Hindu Calendar). Immediately after his release he first sent a telegram to Mahatma Gandhi: "Released this morning—still indifferent health, proceeding Bangalore or Courtallam for a month's rest. Today my 54th birthday. Pray your blessings."

Interviewed by "The Hindu" representative, Satyamurti said, "My first concern is to get well. I have got my ideas on the present political situation. But I must get into touch with public opinion in the country and then place my views before Mahatma Gandhi before I say anything in public."

Immediately after his release itself he left for Nagapattinam to pay his respects to His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Peetam, who was camping in Nagapattinam at that time and get his blessings. On his return he addressed a huge public meeting convened by the Congress Committee to accord him a welcome. Addressing the people, Satyamurti said it gave him a feeling of strength and joy to be with them, after nine months. He said he would be content if he lived long enough to see India free. He affirmed that as a disciplined Congressman, while he would express his views freely and frankly and do his best to convert those who differed from him, he would abide by whatever decision the Congress made on important issues. He affirmed his faith in non-violence and his allegiance to Gandhiji and exhorted the people to have faith in Gandhiji's leadership. He, however, stuck to his strong belief that Congress should return to power in the Provinces and resume its political initiative and its legitimate place in the

seat of government. He addressed another public meeting a day later and reiterated his views.

He wrote to Gandhiji a long letter on August 27 analysing and assessing the political situation and expressing his views, especially on resumption of power by the Congress. He enclosed cuttings of the reports of his speeches after his release. He said in his letter that he was sure that if Congress took back power, the communal question would recede to the background.

Secondly, he said that he was very keen that the activities on the parliamentary front should be revived. He suggested that the Congress Party in the Central Legislature should be permitted to function again as an opposition from the October session. He felt the Congress Party could do something better and fight the Government from within.

Thirdly, he suggested that the Congress should resume power in the Provincial legislatures. If the government refused to permit the Congress to take back office, Satyamurti wanted to carry on a nation-wide campaign for the acceptance of the National Demand.

He said he felt if the Congress Governments functioned in eight or nine Provinces, then they could demand the formation of a truly national government at the Centre for the purpose of the defence of India.

Coming to the "crux of the problem" Satyamurti said that none could question Gandhiji's absolute faith in non-violence. While everybody, including Churchill and President Roosevelt, had accepted non-violence as the ultimate solution, practically all our countrymen wanted India to be organised for defence.

He was sure that if they took back power, the communal question would recede into the background and they would hear less and less of Pakistan. He felt strongly that unless separate electorates went, there was no democratic swaraj for India.

Satyamurti sent copies of this letter to Sardar Patel and Babu Rajendra Prasad.

Gandhiji acknowledged his letter and wrote to him a reply on September 1, 1941. Gandhiji's letter was unusually harsh and

he took Satyamurti severely to task for the speech he made on the day of his release. "I cannot congratulate you on your performance", said Gandhiji. "To say the least it was in indecent haste. You do not show an open mind in your speeches. Your own opinion is made up. You are ill. You need rest and you allow yourself to make a long speech." On the question of Congress taking up ministries in the Provinces again, Gandhiji was strong in his views: "You can never go back to office with any dignity, certainly not to impede war effort. Whose India will you defend? The rulers will never instruct you to fight so as to win independence; whomsoever they train will surely be used to prevent you from winning independence. All this I say apart from *Ahimsa*."

"I adhere to my declaration that it is conceivable that civil disobedience can go on side by side with parliamentary activity. But this does not appear to be the time for that experiment.... I am quite clear in my mind that we gain in terms of freedom by abstaining from participation in parliamentary activity."

Gandhiji said he agreed with Satyamurti in one thing: "I would like to weed the poison of half-hearted satyagrahis and have only those who believe in Satyagraha."

Satyamurti's regard for Gandhiji transcended his political differences. He always swore by Gandhiji and wanted Gandhiji to continue to lead the people and guide the destiny of the country. Satyamurti took a few weeks' rest in Courtallam and returned to Madras to take up the threads where he left. He kept alive the question of recapture of power in the Provinces by the Congress. He addressed several public meetings.

Satyamurti lost his seat in the Madras City Municipal Corporation of which he had been a Member for nearly 15 years.

He continued vigorously his campaign for resumption of the Congress Ministries in the Provinces in spite of the strong disapproval of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. At the same time, as averred by him, he was no doubt a disciplined Congressman, submitting himself to the Congress code.

Satyamurti also urged that the Congress Party in the Central

Assembly should be allowed to attend the Assembly session and resume functioning as a strong opposition party. He wrote to the Congress President, Babu Rajendra Prasad, to this effect. Babu Rajendra Prasad, in his reply to Satyamurti, told him that the conditions which induced the Congress Working Committee to direct the Congress Party to abstain from attending the Central Assembly had not ceased to operate and hence the Party members should not attend the forthcoming session of the Assembly.

Satyamurti continued to be active, addressing public meetings. On September 30, 1941, he addressed a meeting held under the auspices of the "Parliament" of the Young Men's Indian Association. He affirmed his faith in democracy and said that whatever might be the consequences of the war, in India democracy will survive and live in spite of Col. Amery and Mr. Jinnah. He pointed out that the failure of democracy in Europe was due to the failure to deal with economic problems in the right manner. In India, he said, Jinnah and his Muslim League were trying to disrupt the country.

"We must try to evolve a higher concept of nationalism, so that we who claim to be a majority in the country as a whole may convince the minorities that they have nothing to lose but everything to gain by accepting democracy without joint electorate."

Speaking before a record gathering at a meeting held on the occasion of the 73rd birthday of Gandhiji, he exhorted the people to give effect to the constructive programme of Gandhiji: "It is not enough to call themselves followers of Gandhiji; they must practise what he preached."

Satyamurti pursued his campaign and expressed his views about the Congress resuming its activities in the legislatures and recapturing power. But he did not want to do anything against the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi and he tried to get his approval for freedom to express his views. He also met Gandhiji in Sevagram in October and discussed with him the political situation. At the end of the discussion he made a request to Mahatma Gandhi to give him "freedom to carry on public propaganda to

convert the country and the Congress" to his views. According to Satyamurti, Mahatma Gandhi, after consulting Babu Rajendra Prasad, Congress President, who was present then, told him (Satyamurti) that he would have the freedom to propagate his views. Satyamurti requested Gandhiji to write to him in the matter and Gandhiji agreed to do so in due course. Then followed a long correspondence between Gandhiji and Satyamurti and Satyamurti released the correspondence to the Press in November 1941, after obtaining Gandhiji's permission.

C. Rajagopalachariar met Satyamurti at Wardha Railway Station on October 25 and acquainted him with the position and gave him Gandhiji's message that he was in active consultation with friends there. On this information, Satyamurti wrote to Gandhiji hoping that he expected a favourable reply from him as early as possible. He explained how very strongly he felt in the matter and that he could not suppress himself indefinitely nor could he be a hypocrite, he said. He also pointed out that if that freedom was denied it would be wholly out of accord with non-violence as conceived by Gandhiji. How strongly Satyamurti felt in this matter can be gauged from the tenor of his letter. "It would be a violent suppression of a colleague's opinion", he said (if the freedom was not conceded). "It would be wholly undemocratic", he added. He also assured Gandhiji that "at no time shall I carry on the propaganda so as to embarrass you or the movement". Finally, he assured Gandhiji, "I shall make a speech only after getting the freedom from you and keep quiet for some time." Gandhiji, in his reply wrote, "You are free to speak and convert the people to your views. There was never any idea of suppressing you. But when you ask me as a co-worker to guide you, the question of propriety of speech arises. In democracy a person has many rights, but duty automatically restrains him exercising most of them."

Gandhiji's affection and solicitude manifested themselves and he said: "I expect you will carry out your promise to look after your health." This letter took him by surprise, says Satyamurti, and he wrote to Gandhiji on November 6, thus: "You concede

generously that I am free to speak and convert the people to my views and that there is no idea of suppressing it. I am grateful. But when as a co-worker and as the leader of the Congress you tell me that in a non-violent society and therefore, in a democracy, a person has many rights but duty automatically restrains him from using most of them, I understand that I may not exercise the right. I regretfully differ." Then he argued out that in a non-violent society and in a true democracy freedom of speech is the fundamental basis on which true democracy is built. He gave constitutional examples of other countries and quoted precedents in the history of the Congress itself when such freedom of speech was given on more than one occasion. He concluded by asking full freedom to carry on his propaganda and convert the country and the Congress. Gandhiji, in his reply, again clarified his position and said that the Congress Constitution gave the right of free speech and no one expected that he (Satyamurti) should gag himself even for one day. "Please feel free", he said, "to express yourself in any manner you like and whenever you like."

With that, Satyamurti's misapprehensions were dispelled and like a true democrat he wanted to take the people into confidence by publishing his whole correspondence with the permission of Gandhiji.

Satyamurti's health remained unsatisfactory and though he was improving, there were set-backs occasionally. Dr. B. C. Roy examined Satyamurti in Delhi and gave his opinion that in view of the condition of his heart Satyamurti should take complete rest for some months. Satyamurti immediately left for Rohtak to address a Congress meeting. Notwithstanding his poor health, Satyamurti could not keep away from public life and the lure of the public forum was too strong and, his health, he gave only secondary importance.

In the months that followed his release, he addressed meetings held under various auspices and on various subjects. He addressed the students of a College in New Delhi. He spoke on Indians in Ceylon. He spoke on the "values of life" in

the Servants of India Society. He spoke in Devakottai on "Tamil music." He spoke on the need to develop insurance at a function under the auspices of an Insurance Company. He presided over the South India Aryan Conference.

And so, heart or no heart, the indefatigable, irrepressible Satyamurti was all over the place giving his views on every conceivable subject of importance. It looked as if more than medicine it was public activity that kept him up. Nineteen hundred and forty-one was thus a hectic year and when it came to a close, it had left the world and India more and more involved in the War and its gruesome aftermath.

During 1941 India lost two of her great sons, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and Poet Rabindranath Tagore. On May 19, 1941, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, that intrepid veteran of Madras, died. Earlier, he had left the Congress due to differences of opinion on basic issues and virtually retired from politics. Satyamurti, who owed much to Srinivasa Iyengar for his political status and was his loyal lieutenant, paid a glowing tribute to his master of the earlier years while unveiling his portrait in October. He referred to Srinivasa Iyengar as a colossus in his time who achieved seemingly impossible things; he was the author of the Congress resolution on Independence and sowed the seeds of Hindu-Muslim unity; in Madras he put a check to the communal virus that was developing by forging unity between the majority and minority communities among Hindus.

Another sensational event was the disappearance on January 27, 1941 of Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been placed under house arrest in Calcutta.

Satyamurti continued ploughing his lonely furrow and the voice that thundered in the Assembly Halls was now wasted in the wilderness. A year later it was the turn of another great leader — Rajagopalachari — to plough a lone furrow and waste his voice in the wilderness. Both these eminent sons of India were, however, undaunted and carried on their crusade in what they considered was a righteous cause.

Last Post of the Trumpet Voice

THE YEAR 1941 ended with a gloom of disaster. On December 7, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. The United States declared war on Japan. So the Second World War had now become really world-wide. Japan spread its tiny tentacles over Malaya, Singapore and Burma. On March 8, 1942, Rangoon fell. The war was now brought to the gates of India. Britain felt more than ever the urgency to enlist the active and willing co-operation of India.

In the Central Assembly, the Congress benches were empty and the familiar voices of opposition were not heard. The voice that rose above others — Satyamurti's — was no longer there to send tremors through the Government Benches. But still there were a few like N. M. Joshi, Banerji, Chaudhuri, Sant Singh and others who, though in a feeble minority, put up a brave fight in the Assembly.

Satyamurti, in spite of his poor health, was active as ever. Health was no excuse for him to take cover at a time of crisis and danger. He continued addressing meetings and conferences. He went about explaining the Congress Working Committee resolutions and the significance of the Independence Day celebration.

The Japanese threat was very near the shores of India and Madras City was one of the vulnerable points, exposed to danger. In the early hours of the morning of March 2, 1942, a solitary Japanese plane dropped a bomb in Madras City, near the port. Immediately, this created a scare and the military authorities also advised evacuation of the City. Then there was a great exodus of the population, unprecedented in the history of Madras.

People packed up their belongings and deserted the City taking every available and conceivable mode of transport.

The houses were locked and streets deserted. Very few people stuck to their homes and posts, most of them Government employees. Alone among the civilian population, leaders like Rajaji and Satyamurti remained in the City trying to dispel people's fears and putting courage into them. Satyamurti presided over a meeting of members of the Legislative Assembly and Council and City Corporation Councillors convened on March 8 to concert measures for the safety and security of the City. It was decided to observe Civil Defence Day on May 1. Rajaji appealed to the people not to be panicky and run away from their homes.

While Gandhiji and the other senior leaders of the Congress had firmly set their faces against recapturing power in the Provinces, Satyamurti's lone voice was still heard advocating the Congress taking up again the reins of Government in the Provinces. It was not a mere fad, but well-reasoned-out strategy. Satyamurti was in constant correspondence with Gandhiji on the political situation. In a letter dated April 22, 1942 which he wrote from New Delhi to Gandhiji at Wardha, Satyamurti made a clear analysis of the position. He wrote: "I think the official Congress policy is that we cannot defend the country, unless we are put in power and are thus enabled to do so.... As far as I can see, there is no intention on the part of the Government to part with real power to the people of India A miracle may happen and yet they may part with power. But if they do not, speaking for myself, I cannot follow the speeches, for example, of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or C. Rajagopalachariar. The former says that we must defend India against Japan, even as China is doing. The latter says that if he were given an emergency commission, although he is an old man of 60, he will defend Madras, i.e. by the use of force. Frankly, I am unable to follow these sentiments. Apart from violence or non-violence, unless these gentlemen are put in power and have the Government of the country in their hands, I do not know what they can

do. I recognise fully that Indians cannot and ought not to submit to Japanese aggression, but taking an objective and realistic point of view, I am convinced that, unless we are put in power, the only thing we can do is to practise non-violent non-cooperation against the aggressor, and even that, as you have written in the *Harijan*, where military operations are not going on... we must resist Japanese aggression whatever the case may be by non-violent non-cooperation."

It will be seen that Satyamurti went one better than Gandhiji in the matter of non-violent resistance. Satyamurti summed up the position thus: "We cannot, and will not, submit to Japanese aggression in the sense in which, for example, China is doing, unless we are put in power and we are running the Government of the country, subject to such transitional arrangements as may be considered necessary by us. If we are not put in power, it seems to me, we have then to make it clear that our resistance to Japan can only be in the way of non-violent non-cooperation by the Congress and you ought to be in charge of it."

He also gave his views on the advisability of Gandhiji meeting Jinnah. He felt that the meeting of the two leaders would itself have a great effect on the people of this country. Even if nothing came out of it, he felt the gesture would be appreciated by the people.

Gandhiji would have no doubt given Satyamurti's views due weight and consideration and must have been impressed, if not, influenced by them. The succeeding three or four months were one of suspense, hope and fear — hope that Britain would, in its own interests, concede India's independence, if only to keep her on its side and take over the responsibility of defending herself and fear because the Japanese aggression had so rapidly advanced that it posed a threat to India.

Britain now shed some of its imperialist prestige and climbed down: she was anxious to retain India on her side. Sir Stafford Cripps, a Labour Member of the British War Cabinet, was sent to India to negotiate with the Indian leaders and bring about a settlement. Sir Stafford Cripps was a man of liberal views and

he came with the best of intentions to create goodwill in India. But unfortunately he was tied down by limitations of the British policy, which though it took a more liberal turn, yet had many reservations and the British Cabinet, which had been beset with imminent problems, including defending the country against the German blitzkrieg, was not yet free from the imperialist outlook. Sir Stafford Cripps came with some definite proposals to resolve the deadlock. For the first time the British Government declared its policy towards India which was linked with cessation of hostilities — mark the expression: they did not say “at the end of the war” which would mean an endless wait, but said “cessation of hostilities”... Perhaps the British declaration went further to paint the glorious picture of a new Indian Union as a Dominion of the British Commonwealth. It further conceded the idea of a Constituent Assembly framing a Constitution. But the snag in the proposals was that a loophole was created whereby the option to remain independently outside the Union was given to such Provinces which did not desire to join the Union. This was the thin end of the wedge for a separate Muslim State, according to Jinnah’s idea of Pakistan.

Satyamurti who had been one of those who had harboured high hopes about the outcome of the Cripps Mission, at the outset, became disillusioned in the end. He observed, “Sir Stafford Cripps came with proposals which he thought were big. He has now returned, speaking in the accents of Col. Amery II.” But more of this later.

Satyamurti had two interviews with Gandhiji at the beginning of April 1942 and he met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, also. He placed before them his views on the Cripps proposals.

He continued expressing his views on resisting Japanese aggression and he appealed to the leaders of various communities to come to an agreement in order to present a united front against aggression and safeguard the country against internal disorder. Satyamurti entered into lists with C. Rajagopalachari, who had cut himself adrift from the Congress and Gandhiji and was carrying

on a vigorous propaganda for joining hands with the Muslim League, by conceding the idea of Pakistan, to resist Japanese aggression.

Satyamurti said that his own future propaganda depended on what C. Rajagopalachari was going to do: "If today I think he could do the slightest good to the citizens of Madras by taking power here, I would vote for C. Rajagopalachari. But I am absolutely sure no good will result from his move. Therefore I am against it." He criticised Rajaji strongly for his attitude in regard to carrying on parleys with the Muslim League and agreeing to the dismemberment of the country on communal lines by conceding Pakistan. He launched a vigorous propaganda against Rajaji's move and toured Tamil Nad to organise public opinion. He also wired to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, suggesting that "Rajaji's rebellion must be strongly put down."

Satyamurti was specially invited to attend the A.I.C.C. meeting which was held in July 1942 at Wardha, but he could not do so as his doctor opined that any exertion or excitement or railway journey in the then condition of his heart would be inadvisable.

On August 2, 1942 Satyamurti wrote to the papers welcoming "The Daily Herald's" approach to the Indian question and said that the paper was able to see the other side of the medal and the British people were being roused to an awareness of the realities. He reiterated India's stand and defended the Congress policy.

Sir Stafford Cripps had been charged with the responsibility of negotiating with Indian leaders on the basis of the declaration by the British Government. His task was a difficult one as he had to face different ideologies. Even at the outset the Congress objected to the idea of option for the Provinces to join the Union. Then the question of Defence was another contested point. The Congress stand was that unless Defence was handed over to Indians, it was not possible for it to accept the proposals and cooperate with the British government in the War. Hence the Congress rejected the proposals.

After protracted talks, discussions, get-togethers and ding-dong negotiations, Sir Stafford Cripps returned home, a disappointed man. He came, raised expectations and went back leaving bitter disappointment among the leaders. After the failure of the Cripps mission, there were mutual recriminations — the British blaming it on the Congress and the Congress questioning the sincerity of the British intentions.

The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution calling on the British Government to end its rule in India at the same time assuring them that India never intended to embarrass Britain in the prosecution of the War. The Working Committee also gave a warning that if its proposals were not accepted, the Congress "will then be reluctantly compelled to use all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920." A meeting of the All India Congress Committee was held at Bombay on August 7, 1942. It was at this momentous session of the A.I.C.C. that the famous "Quit India" resolution was passed, on the fateful day of August 8, 1942. The Government lost no time now and instead of waiting to see how far the Congress could go, with one swoop it put all the Congress leaders including Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others in jail. In the early hours of August 9, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. Others were arrested at Bombay and the Congress was declared an illegal body. The whole story started all over again, but this was the final chapter which turned the destinies of a great empire and a great nation.

Satyamurti who had been specially invited to attend the A.I.C.C. session left Bombay for Madras by train on August 10. Dr. Gilder, Gandhiji's physician in Bombay, examined Satyamurti and issued the following bulletin: "I examined Mr. Satyamurti today. He is suffering from myocardiac degeneration of heart block and intra-ventricular block. He gets exhausted very soon and is not fit for work." Probably the Government knew that Satyamurti would be the last man to take rest; evidently they were so concerned about his health that they decided to give him enforced rest in jail. He was arrested in Arkonam on

August 11, 1942 when he was on his way to Madras from Bombay; he was taken to the Vellore jail. There was no trial or conviction and he was put under detention under the Defence of India Rules, like the other leaders who were considered dangerous to the State.

The Vellore Central Jail had now become a familiar place for Satyamurti to whom it became a holiday resort — away from the strenuous work he was accustomed to do outside. The officials, jailers and warders, with whom he was popular, welcomed him with joy. But their joy was shortlived; for he was soon transferred to Amraoti Jail (now in Maharashtra) along with other prominent leaders from South India. He got ill in Amraoti Jail and he was put under treatment in the local Irwin Hospital. But his condition did not improve and he was brought back to Madras, and admitted in the General Hospital for treatment on January 10, 1943. He was still under detention. But the Government ordered his release on February 2, 1943. Satyamurti stayed on in the Hospital and continued to undergo the treatment for his ailment. His condition showed some improvement, but a few weeks later, there was a setback and complications set in and just past midnight at one o' clock on March 28 Satyamurti breathed his last. His body was taken to his residence at Thyagarayanagar where it was laid in state.

As the news of his death spread, huge crowds began pouring in Thyagarayanagar at his residence. Thousands of fellow-workers, followers, admirers and members of the public surged into his house to pay their last respects. Eminent leaders like the Rt Hon Srinivasa Sastri and others called at his residence. Leaders of all parties, Judges of the High Court, prominent citizens from all walks of life, humble people who were his admirers — all paid their homage to the departed leader. The cremation took place with traditional rites. At the cremation ground leaders of the Congress and other parties paid glowing tributes to the great leader.

The voice that thundered and made the opponents quail was stilled in the still of the night. The political horizon of Tamil

Nad—nay the country—became dark. Like a meteor Satyamurti skimmed through the political sky, shedding effulgence with his brilliance for two score years and more and disappeared in a blaze of glory, leaving a trail of eloquence and brilliant oratory and the echo of his voice, which lingered in the Legislative Councils, the Assembly halls and the public forums.

One of the first to pay a handsome tribute to Satyamurti was C. Rajagopalachari who was in New Delhi at that time. He said: "A restless soul has found rest. Red-hot will to live had been of no avail. Madras has lost a dynamic personality. I am sorry I am far away from the bereaved family which stands sorely in need of solace from friends." Tributes came pouring in from all quarters, from friends, as well as foes, from admirers as well as adversaries, from eminent persons from all walks of life as well as from humble people who knew him and admired him. Gandhiji and other leaders being in jail could not send their tributes but everyone who knew him was shocked at his premature death. Satyamurti wanted to live to see India attaining Independence. Destiny willed it otherwise; he missed it by just four years. Even in his last moments he must have pleaded with the God of Death that he would be ready for the final goodbye to earth, immediately after he had seen the glory of India attaining Independence. But whom the Gods love, especially the God of Death, die young.

Had he lived longer, Satyamurti would have undoubtedly made a profound mark in Parliament. The country was poorer for it after his death.

"The Hindu", which rarely devotes an editorial column for an obituary, did Satyamurti the unique honour of dedicating a full-column editorial on Satyamurti. Under the caption "Servant of the People" it said, "He was a born fighter—a 'leonine' fighter, as the Scots would say to whom the fight was the thing". It described him further as a "very Rupert of Debate, master of startling repartees—the punch that deflates without leaving a sting—he shone supreme as a gladiator in the parliamentary arena." That puts Satyamurti's personality in a nutshell.

Almost all the important newspapers paid their tributes. The tributes were not merely from India but from abroad also.

This was yet another instance of proof of the old adage that a man's merit is known only after his death.

The star trailed its lustrous course across the political sky for five decades and set suddenly — perhaps the call of the other world was stronger and so it disappeared leaving a blaze of glory behind.

Rare was this multiple personality
Great was his work
Greater remains his memory.

The Many Splendoured Personality

SATYAMURTI'S MAIN CONTRIBUTION to the building of modern India was, of course, through his parliamentary work and his able fight with the British bureaucracy, in the legislature. But this was not all. Though politics took most of his time and energy, his interests were wide and he made notable contributions in the field of education, art, civic work and several other fields of service — whatever he took up, he went the whole hog and was thorough in his approach and service.

In the field of education, his contribution was as singular as in the legislature. He was an elected member of the Senate of the Madras University for several years and till the last he was associated with the running of the University and education work.

The Annamalai University owes its existence to him and while Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar was the founder of the University, it was Satyamurti who was the brain behind the idea. His pet idea of a residential University was partially fulfilled in the establishment of the Annamalai University. He helped to pilot the Bill for the establishment of the Annamalai University in the Madras Legislative Council. He took a live interest in the affairs of both the Madras and Annamalai Universities and he rarely missed a meeting of the Senates of the two Universities.

On women's education, Satyamurti had some definite views. Though he was considered a conservative — if not an orthodox Hindu — he was all for educating girls. But regarding higher education to girls he expressed his opinion thus in one of his letters written to his daughter Lakshmi, in July 1941, from the

General Hospital, Madras, where he was undergoing treatment as a prisoner :

"Need higher education in the case of girls also mean collegiate education ? Education is a life-long process. Books are not the only means of education. Professional teachers are not the only teachers. Examinations and degrees are not the only hallmarks of education. The whole world, nature and life are great educators. We live and learn....

"Let me say at once that I want our girls to get the highest possible education in literature, in your case e.g. in Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit and English. I want you to become a great scholar in all these languages and literatures or at least in some of them. Then I want you to know the history and geography of the world to understand world affairs. You must know enough elementary science to take an intelligent interest in things around you. You must know domestic hygiene and public health. You must know the history and geography and politics of your country fairly intimately. You must know at least one of the fine arts — music or painting. You must be so well educated that you can, with the help of books, learn more. All this and more I want. But I am not generally in favour of girls joining professional colleges."

Satyamurti's interest in civic and municipal affairs was equally intense. He was foremost in the fight of the Congress for capturing Municipal bodies as early as the twenties. He was elected to the Madras Municipal Corporation in 1925 and almost till his death he continued to be a member of the Corporation. He was elected Mayor of the Corporation in 1939. He distinguished himself in the post and in the brief period of one year of his Mayoralty, he set about making various improvements in the City. First, he cleaned up the municipal administration, making it more efficient. He wanted to make Madras the City Beautiful and set about cleaning the slums and cleaning the city and providing parks. During his Mayoralty there was a severe drought and the water supply to the City was affected badly as the only reservoir for the city was drying up. Satyamurti took vigorous measures to give relief to the people by providing immediately a number of

borewell pumps throughout the city and having wells dug to feed the water mains. But his notable contribution was the project to build another reservoir in Poondi, near Madras, to augment the water supply. This was his major contribution to the City's civic amenities, which stands to his credit. The "Satyamurti Sagar", as the Poondi reservoir was named in his memory afterwards, still serves to augment the sorely inadequate water supply in Madras. As in the other public bodies with which he was connected, Satyamurti was active in the Corporation and his constructive ideas improved the tone of civic administration in the City. He was conscientious in this, as in other spheres of public work, and in spite of his pre-occupations he gave his devoted attention to civic affairs; he was very regular in attending the Corporation meetings and participated in discussions on all important matters. It was during his Mayoralty that the All India Mayors' Conference was first convened in Madras.

Satyamurti was a lover of arts. In the midst of his exacting public work, he found time to interest himself in the fine arts. He was one of the original founders of the Music Academy, Madras, with which premier institution, for the promotion of music and dance, he was actively connected till the end. He was a great lover of music and he encouraged and patronised musicians.

Talking of music, Satvamurti was fond of quoting from Sanskrit:

*Paśur Vēthi, Śiśur Vēthi
Vēthi Gānārasam Panini —*

"The animal (cow) knows, the child knows, the cobra knows the essence (sweetness) of music."

In one of his letters to his daughter Lakshmi, he says, "A love of fine arts is a sure sign of culture." As the Sanskrit poet has it:

*Sāhitya Sangīta Kalā Vihīnaha;
Sākshāt Paśuhu Puch Vishāna Vihinaha*

"He who is devoid of poetry, music and art is a real beast, only he has no tail or horns."

In his public speeches, Satyamurti used to say, "We shall win our way to Swaraj singing."

He had an equally great love for the other fine arts — dance, painting and sculpture.

In another letter to his daughter Lakshmi, he extols the virtues and beauty of the arts of painting and sculpture which, he says, give form to our conceptions of the Divine.

"What has always evoked the greatest admiration in me is the expression on the faces of these so-called lifeless figures," he says, referring to sculptures.

Satyamurti was truly a man of culture, above all.

He gave a cultural tone to the Congress in Tamil Nad by organising an Art Festival of Music and Dance during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian National Congress; subsequently, too, these cultural festivals were continued as part of the Annual Exhibitions.

Satyamurti conceived and organised the All India Swadeshi and Khadi Exhibition first during the Congress Jubilee Year and thereafter in subsequent years also. These Exhibitions and Cultural Festivals became an annual feature of the Tamil Nad Congress.

Satyamurti's interest in the stage was also another side of his cultural life. He was an active member of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, one of the oldest cultural organisations in Madras, which specialised in amateur dramas. Satyamurti acted in many of the plays produced by the S. V. Sabha and he took part in Sanskrit and Tamil dramas staged by the Sabha. One of his outstanding performances was in "Manohara" a popular Tamil play in which he was in the title role, as hero. Among other outstanding performances was his role as *Vidushaka* (the Jester) in "Mricchakatika" ("Mud Cart") the famous Sanskrit play which was presented on the occasion of the All India Oriental Conference held in Madras in 1926.

Satyamurti's interest in films was equally great. He presided over the first All-India Motion Pictures Conference held in Bombay in 1939. He was the first President of the South Indian

Film Chamber of Commerce. He wanted films to be produced not only for entertainment, but also for enlightenment and education. As early as the thirties, he was one of the first to recognise the film as a powerful medium which could reach the masses and he was also one of those who considered it not as a commercial industry but as an art like the drama, music or dance. He wanted this great and powerful medium, whose potentiality he recognised, to be used to build up the nation, and not to be treated as a money-spinning device.

When broadcasting was in its infancy, Satyamurti was one of the first to take to it and took very keen interest in its development. In the Central Assembly he was one of the few who took live and intelligent interest in the proper development of the radio as one of the nation-building activities. His questions and his speeches on the subject reveal how far-sighted and sound were his views on broadcasting. He was the earliest to envisage the possibilities of commercial broadcasting. He wanted the radio as an instrument to develop and foster music on the right lines.

Satyamurti's linguistic proficiency ran to three languages, English, Tamil and Sanskrit.

A keen student of Sanskrit, Satyamurti was one of the pillars of the Sanskrit Academy in which he used to take live interest. He could speak in Sanskrit and his early training under his father had laid strong foundations for the love of Sanskrit in him. No speech or lecture of his would be complete, either in the legislature or on the public platform, without an apt quotation in Sanskrit.

Next to Sanskrit, he loved Tamil. In the twenties and early thirties when the hallmark of a politician or a public man was his ability to speak in fluent English with affected English accent, Satyamurti used to speak in Tamil to large audiences. His Tamil was impeccable, eloquent, flowing and in simple straight language, devoid of pedantry; and this appealed to the masses. In fact, he set the fashion in speaking in Tamil.

His English was equally flawless and eloquent. His was not

an affected artificial style, trying to imitate the Englishman in pronunciation and diction. He was even made fun of for talking in "Tamil English". But no one could find fault with the syntax or grammar. He was a pastmaster in English oratory which stood him in good stead when he visited England and also in the Legislative Council and Central Assembly. His speeches were patterns of perfection so far as the language was concerned. He had no patience with faulty English and often he twitted the Government benches for bad English and bad drafts.

Satyamurti was equally at home with English and Tamil. But his love of the mother tongue was greater. He urged strongly that the medium of instruction in schools should be in the mother tongue and English should be an optional subject.

In three of his letters to his daughter Lakshmi he gave, from his own experience, some very useful points in public speaking. He had no truck with people who deprecated public speaking and said that action is better than speaking. "Speech is the necessary prelude to concerted action", he tells his daughter. "It is only those who cannot speak who affect to despise public speaking." Then he gives some very relevant guidelines for public speaking, e.g. physical appearance, gestures, (which he considered very important), voice, etc. He drew the line of difference between speeches in the Assembly and on public platforms. While in the Legislative Assembly one could speak any length of time, (he cited his own speech he made, for more than one day), "speaking before public audiences", he said, "you must always keep your hand on the pulse of the audience — and long before the audience gets tired you must stop." "The secret of success in art", he says, "is the art of omission. A painter when he paints a palm tree does not paint all the palm leaves. He paints just enough to create the impression of a full-grown tree. You must leave your audience with a feeling that you should have spoken more." He always did that; he was a pastmaster in the art of public speaking.

"When you address public audiences, you must prepare your

speeches in advance. I always do, unless I am taken by surprise. Then I do my best", he tells his daughter. "When members of the audience do you the honour of hearing you, you must return the compliment by preparing your speeches carefully."

Satyamurti always took meticulous care in preparing his speeches in advance either for the legislature or for the public platform. He would marshall his facts, arrange his arguments and put them down in cogent sequence. He would read them over and over again before he went to deliver his speeches. But he deprecated manuscript eloquence—reading openly a written speech. That was not his idea of preparing a speech in advance. He laid stress on the voice and its proper modulation while delivering a speech. "A good voice is sometimes God's gift to a man or woman", he says. He had the full grace of this divine gift which made him what he was as a public speaker and he made full use of it to advantage.

Satyamurti's interest in public affairs and public questions was varied, all-pervading and all-round. Whether it was the *kisans'* plight or the *mirasdars'* cause, or the non-gazetted officers' problems or the workers' grievances, or students' demands, Satyamurti was there ready to take them up and fight for them.

He gave his time, thought and attention to social problems also. Himself a devout Hindu, dubbed as a conservative and orthodox, his views on questions like untouchability and child marriage were quite progressive. He made fighting speeches espousing the cause of untouchables in the Legislative Council in Madras in his early parliamentary career and later in the Legislative Assembly. On temple entry by Harijans he says, in one of his letters to his daughter, "these temples should be open to all conforming Hindus. ...And inside the temple there should be no gradation among worshippers: Brahmin, non-Brahmin, etc." Referring to the propagation of Hinduism on right lines he says (in the same letter), "Something more should be done and more systematically especially among Harijans. They are as good Hindus as we and they deserve and require all such service as we can give them."

Dwelling on the need for removal of untouchability, in another letter to his daughter, Satyamurti says: "You know I am a conservative in many matters. But even I must admit that I cannot find any justification or reason for the inhuman custom of untouchability by birth." Again on temple entry he says: "I am a devout believer in temples and temple worship. But I can see no justification for the exclusion of Harijans as a class from the temples." But on social legislation he had reservations. "Temple entry has come to stay. And Sree Meenakshi in Madura and Sree Andavar in Palni are as omnipresent and benevolent and merciful as ever with the Harijans coming and worshipping them." His succinct view was that social legislation should be in consonance with public opinion and not too far in advance of it — quite an understandable, if not acceptable view.

Another constructive programme which claimed Satyamurti's attention was the development of Khadi and rural industries and handicrafts. As a Congressman he was bound to adhere to the Khadi creed. But then he raised his voice of dissent and earned the displeasure of some top leaders, because he resisted the idea of making a fetish of it by imposing the condition that every Congressman should be compulsorily a habitual khadi-wearer. But his love for Khadi was from the economic point of view, as he recognised the Charkha was a potential instrument in alleviating poverty in the villages by providing a part-time occupation which would help the half-starved villager earn a few annas a day and thereby augment his meagre income. He fought strongly for Khadi in the Central Assembly. Similarly, his interest in village industries expressed itself in powerful speeches in the Assembly.

On Prohibition, he held very strong views. He made fighting speeches in the Madras Legislative Council when the question of prohibition loomed large and the then ruling Justice Party was dilly-dallying with the question.

Satyamurti was, above all, an intensely religious person. He was a devout Hindu and his faith in the Hindu scripture was unshakable on the strong foundations laid in his childhood and

early years by his parents. On this he built his strong superstructure of religion. He was a staunch believer in God. "I believe there is a God—a divine force which directs all", he tells his daughter. He gives out his faith in the following words: "I profoundly and sincerely believe that if we live good lives, control our senses and do only good to others and no harm, sooner or later we must attain Moksha." This is the essence of the Hindu religion and the essence of Satyamurti's faith.

Satyamurti was a conformist. He believed in all the rituals ordained by the Shastras as well as tradition. His day would usually begin very early with a bath and the performance of daily religious rites. He would recite or read (do *Parayana*) at least a few verses of the Ramayana and perform the simple ordinary *poojahs* which every Hindu householder is enjoined to do and then only proceed to attend to his normal duties as a public man. Even when he was courting imprisonment, he first finished his daily religious routine and then went and courted arrest. Even in the prison he would not give up his daily routine of *poojahs*.

Satyamurti was a great devotee of the two Jagadgurus of Kamakoti and Sringeri. He would frequently go to these great religious leaders and pay his respects to them. Often he used to discuss with them some of the burning questions of the day like untouchability, temple entry and social legislation. There was not a subject affecting life which did not claim his attention, deep thought and expression of views. His letters to his daughter are not merely private letters intended only for his daughter. They contain gems of thought on every conceivable subject from the right kind of food and correct mode of eating to social service, war, social etiquette, personal manners, language question, religion, social reform, art of public speaking, art of living and several other subjects which are of interest to every one of us.

Satyamurti believed in good and happy living. He did not believe in "sack-cloth and ashes". He loved good dress, good food, good living. He was generous to a fault, hospitable, amiable, sociable and always had a cheerful and optimistic outlook on life.

Such was the many splendoured personality that was Satyamurti.

A Leader Among Men : A Man Among Leaders

BY HIS UNIQUE qualities and extraordinary talents, Satyamurti outshone many others as a leader among men. His powerful oratory, his striking personality and above all his stentorian voice cast a spell over thousands of people. He became the monarch of the platform and the darling of the people.

But Satyamurti was above all a man — a lovable and beloved man — not only of the people but among the leaders as well. Gandhiji was the foremost among leaders who captivated Satyamurti and who was captivated by Satyamurti. Between him and Satyamurti there were radical differences, e.g. Satyamurti never approved of the non-cooperation movement and he never joined the movement in the early twenties. But his regard for and faith in Gandhiji remained undiminished. He recognised Gandhiji as the one leader who could alone lead the country and though he differed from Gandhiji, he was always loyal and faithful to the Congress — then led by Gandhiji. He never rebelled openly and never left the Congress. Other giants like Srinivasa Iyengar and Rajaji left the Congress.

Gandhiji had always a soft corner for Satyamurti and though he did not approve of Satyamurti's actions — especially in regard to office-acceptance — ultimately he gave complete freedom to Satyamurti to propagate his views and canvass for them within the Congress. Gandhiji recognised Satyamurti's talent for legislature work and when the question of council entry was being hotly debated in the Congress, Gandhiji said that, if the Congress wanted to enter the Councils only to expose the autocratic nature

of Government, it was enough if Satyamurti was alone sent, to the Council. Such was his confidence in Satyamurti's ability as a parliamentarian. Gandhiji was always solicitous, personally, about Satyamurti's health and he advised him to look after it carefully. Gandhiji was the one leader for whom Satyamurti had the greatest reverence and regard, which remained undiminished till the end.

Rajaji was the other leader who had great affection for Satyamurti. But Rajaji never allowed his personal affection compromise with his views. From the outset the two leaders were on opposite poles. From the non-cooperation and council entry days the two leaders were in opposite camps. It was only when the Congress first contested the provincial elections that the two leaders were brought closer together. At one stage, Rajaji, when he temporarily retired from politics, put Satyamurti on the saddle and was instrumental in getting him elected as President of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee (during the thirties). The two leaders worked together when the Congress contested the provincial elections and swept the polls in several provinces including Madras. Satyamurti was the hero of the Congress victories in Madras. Rajaji was still in retreat. Satyamurti could have become the provincial leader and become the Premier of Madras. But by certain adventitious circumstances, when there was a move to bring back Rajaji to politics and persuade him to head the first Congress Ministry in Madras, Satyamurti was the first to welcome the move; not only that, he graciously gave his graduates' constituency seat—which was in his pocket—to Rajaji to enable him to win easily and take up the leadership. Satyamurti was then still a member of the Central Assembly to which he was elected in 1934. But even then it was generally expected he would be drafted into Rajaji's Cabinet. He had even expressed his willingness to work under Rajaji's leadership as a minister, as he considered it a privilege. But it was a strange destiny and mysterious force that kept him away from his beloved home Province. Satyamurti forgot all about this and continued his work in the Central Assembly.

His relationship with Rajaji, though perhaps not as cordial as before, was still friendly, until the "Quit India" movement. When Rajaji differed from Gandhiji and other leaders on the issue of compromising with the Muslim League on the question of Pakistan, Satyamurti took up cudgels against him and he even wrote to the Congress President to take disciplinary action against Rajaji. It was unfortunate the rift came, but the regard Satyamurti had for Rajaji, as a man, was there still and Rajaji's affection for Satyamurti was no whit less.

For Sardar Patel, Satyamurti had the highest regard and admiration. Sardar Patel reciprocated the feeling. None was more unhappy than Sardar Patel, when Satyamurti was left out of the Madras Cabinet and he expressed his indignation at this, in a letter to Satyamurti.

For Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Satyamurti had profound admiration and regard; but unfortunately the two leaders did not see eye to eye in many matters. It was during the Calcutta Congress, in 1928, that the leaders were in the same camp, when there was a raging controversy over the Nehru (Motilal) Report and the acceptance of Dominion Status. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was opposed to his father's views and he was one of those impatient younger leaders who wanted to declare Independence forthwith. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who was then the leader of the Madras Provincial Congress, joined hands with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. Satyamurti was then the trusted lieutenant of Srinivasa Iyengar and he was on the side of the militant younger group.

Later when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became the Congress President, Satyamurti, as the Tamil Nad Provincial Congress Committee President, welcomed Nehru when he visited Madras. He organised the tour of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Tamil Nad and made it a thorough success. Thereafter, there was not much in common between the two leaders: no fault of Satyamurti nor of Nehru. Temperamentally they were poles apart. Satyamurti however had long and continued correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru on many live issues at the time.

Subhas Chandra Bose was another younger leader for whom Satyamurti had profound admiration. They came together in the Calcutta Congress (1928) and their relationship remained cordial.

If there was one leader who could be said to have brought Satyamurti to the forefront in politics it is S. Srinivasa Iyengar who was a giant in politics in his own way; he shot across the political horizon like a meteor and vanished like a meteor. It was Srinivasa Iyengar who more or less "discovered" Satyamurti and utilised his talent in full. Satyamurti was a rising young politician and Srinivasa Iyengar caught him young and brought him under his influence. Satyamurti greatly benefited by his association with Srinivasa Iyengar in more ways than one and under his inspired guidance it was possible for Satyamurti to exhibit his talents in full colours. There were occasions when Satyamurti had to differ from Srinivasa Iyengar. But as long as it lasted, the relationship between Srinivasa Iyengar and Satyamurti was one of cordiality and mutual regard.

With Bhulabhai Desai, who was the Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, Satyamurti's relations were close. He became Deputy Leader of the Congress Party and between them they shared the honours of leading the Opposition in the Central Assembly effectively. Bhulabhai had entire confidence in Satyamurti and Satyamurti paid the respect due to Bhulabhai Desai as Leader.

Of all his political associates, Kamaraj stands out as his able lieutenant and organiser. Kamaraj came into contact with Satyamurti in the early years of his political career. As a young man, Kamaraj was attracted to Satyamurti, whose powers of oratory cast a great spell over Kamaraj, as over thousands of other young men. It is however a paradox that Kamaraj did not imbibe the oratorical powers of Satyamurti. Kamaraj was the strong silent man and his unique powers of organisation built up the Congress edifice over which Satyamurti ruled and shone. Satyamurti owed much of his success as a leader in Tamil Nad to Kamaraj, who built up a well-knit Congress organisation

throughout Tamil Nad by enlisting the support of a band of loyal young workers who were equally devoted. He was to Satyamurti what Lakshmana was to Rama. He was such a devoted follower of Satyamurti. Satyamurti was the guiding spirit and Kamaraj was the active body in Tamil Nad politics. Often Satyamurti would lose his temper if, sometimes, something was not done or went wrong and he would vent his wrath on Kamaraj. Kamaraj would silently bear it all without being least offended and would not utter a word of remonstrance or even answer. But he proved his devotion and ability in action and solid work. Satyamurti would cool down the next minute and make Kamaraj forget his impulsive temper. Satyamurti's affection for Kamaraj was that of a father or elder brother and if he scolded him it was for his good. Satyamurti recognised Kamaraj's ability and capacity and he knew that Kamaraj would one day come to the forefront and shine as an eminent leader.

At one time, when there was a tussle over the Presidentship of the Tamil Nad Congress Committee and communal forces threatened to destroy the unity in the Congress in Tamil Nad, Satyamurti put up Kamaraj for the Presidentship and put the responsibility of running the Congress organisation on his young shoulders. He did not stop there. He voluntarily and willingly became Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee and worked in that capacity under the Presidentship of Kamaraj. This was after he had held the Presidentship previously. No one in Satyamurti's position and status would have that attitude of self-abnegation and sacrifice in the interests of the common good. Kamaraj owed much of his later greatness and leadership to Satyamurti who like the ancient Acharyas and Gurus trained and groomed him for leadership. Kamaraj, like a loyal and faithful disciple, never forgot that he owed his political status and stature to his Guru. Satyamurti's greatest contribution to Tamil Nad — and the nation — was Kamaraj whom he moulded as a political leader. Kamaraj's greatest contribution was the consummate organising capacity which made possible for Satyamurti to build up Tamil Nad as a premier province

under his leadership. It may perhaps be well said that without Satyamurti there would have been no Kamaraj (as we knew him) and without Kamaraj there would have been no Satyamurti as leader of Tamil Nad.

Satyamurti had some sterling human qualities which endeared him even to his opponents. While he was an aggressive critic of the Government and Government Members in the legislature, he never hesitated to give "the devil its due". On many occasions he paid glowing tributes to his opponents. The Rajah of Panagal, the leader of the Justice Party, got Satyamurti's meed of praise for getting the Religious Endowments Bill through in the Madras Legislative Council. On Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member of the Central Government, who was the favourite target of attack for Satyamurti, he showered praises for his qualities and capacity. Outside the legislature his cordiality knew no bounds and he was friendly with even his opponents. Whenever he was absent from the Assembly, it was the Government Benches that missed him most.

So far we have seen Satyamurti only as a public figure. What was he in his private life? For one thing he had very little time for his private life. But at home he was the most devoted husband and loving father of his only child, his daughter, Lakshmi. He showered his affection on her. Though she was very young, he used to take her into his confidence and even ask her opinion on many things. Whenever he went out on his work, either to the Congress House or the Corporation, or the Legislature or to public meetings, he would dress nicely and well—he believed in dressing well and making a presentable appearance—he would call Lakshmi and ask her how he looked. He would take her suggestions and act on them even in the matter of dress. She was indeed his mirror.

When, in 1941, he was in the General Hospital, Madras, as prisoner, he wrote a series of letters to his daughter, Lakshmi. The subjects were varying—from art and public speaking to the art of eating and social service. The letters which were later published in book form under the title "At the Threshold

of Life" are literature in themselves and they were not merely intended for Lakshmi, but the whole younger generation who could learn many useful things by reading them.

Lakshmi was his only child and naturally his pet daughter. He brought her up like a son and wanted her to become great like him. When he was ailing and on his death-bed, he had found for her a suitable young man, an intellectual, coming of a very respectable family; he even had the wedding date fixed. He was hoping to come out of the hospital and attend the wedding. But, alas, fate willed it otherwise and he could witness neither his daughter's wedding, nor the attainment of Independence. When he knew the end was near, he asked his people not to postpone or cancel the wedding but to celebrate on the day fixed and it was done according to his wishes. Lakshmi was also a member of the Legislative Council for a term, during the Chief Ministership of Kamaraj; it was Kamaraj's gesture to his Guru's daughter.

Satyamurti was known for his generous hospitality. Though he could not afford to have a lavish life, he lived a comfortable life. He loved to entertain friends and be entertained by them. His affable and sociable nature and human qualities endeared him to everybody who came into contact with him. Though in politics he was a harsh critic, he had no enemies. He lived an active life and he loved the good things of life, but he was snatched away too soon before he could enjoy life fully.

Satyamurti was a great parliamentarian, a great politician, a great patriot. But above all he was a man—a man with human qualities which made him all the greater. There may be leaders of eminence, there may be men of greatness, but none like Satyamurti ever was or will ever be—

"Na bhōōtō Na Bhavishyati."

EPILOGUE

What was Satyamurti's contribution to the Nation, in the final analysis? The answer can be summed up in two words: Parliamentary Democracy. It may be well said he was the Father of Parliamentary Democracy in India. Other great — or even greater — leaders have contributed to the nation's growth in many ways. Many other leaders have done great work in the legislatures before and after him. But if there is one single person who has been responsible for shaping Parliamentary Democracy in India, it is Satyamurti. With single-minded devotion, he fought for capturing the legislatures and fighting from within and then capturing power for the good of the Nation. Those who scoffed at him at the beginning remained to pray —and praise him. Today India owes its Parliamentary life largely to the indefatigable efforts of Satyamurti.

Satyamurti will stand out in history as the architect of Parliamentary Democracy in India.

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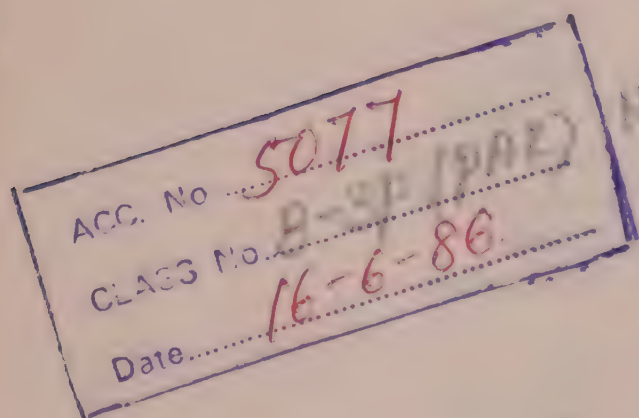
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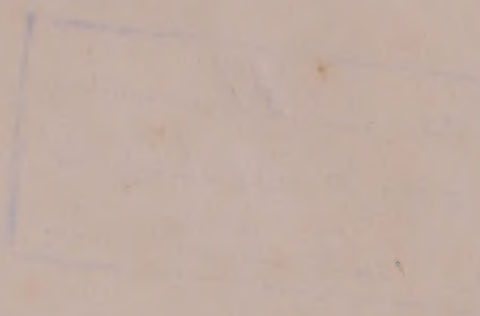


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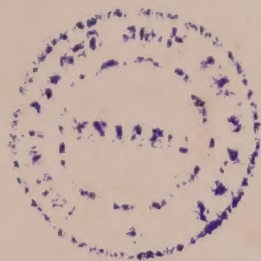
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